

WHITTIER ALLIANCE – Business Association – MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, November 14th, 2007 – 7:45 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.

NiCo Plating – 2929 First Avenue South

Present Erica Christ, Paula Horan, Christian Johnson, Cindy Ohlenkamp, Michelle Stolp, Lisa Vecoli, Mike O’Keefe, Pam Nordaune,
Speakers Mark Hockley (NiCo Plating), Katy Doty and Kathie Walker (KLD Consulting), Julie Snow and Pau _____ (Snow Architects)
Staff Marian Biehn

Call to Order at 8:10am by Chair Erica Christ 8:00

A motion to approve the Agenda as written carried and the Conflict of Interest Policy was noted

Approval of Oct & Nov Minutes was postponed to Dec.

MEETING HOST: NiCo Plating

Mark Hockley and NiCo have been in the building 30 years. The building was a small creamery. The current building (expansion) was done in 1997. Mark is over one of 3 divisions of one company that supports manufacturing industry and does metal finishing. The industry has been troubled since 2001 but NiCo has realigned to be in a better market. They don’t serve the automotive building. NiCo serves the 5 state area with lots of similar businesses in the Metro Area.

NiCo is a “service” for other business—they take incomplete parts and put a metal finish on them—zinc, nickel, chrome, etc for protection, and then send the part back to mfg (like 3M). They do some tumbling and burnishing, and finishing on metal parts before they get assembled. Commercial parts not household items. There are substantial environmental demands. Filters are changed out 5x a day. Metal finishing is the most regulated industry in the state with more regulation being proposed by Home Land Security due to the chemicals they use. Mark has 130 employees on 3 shifts -- shut down Friday night and start up Sun night. Nearly everything is recycled. Most of the water gets multi-filter cleaned so that water going down the drain is cleaned to the drinkable level.. The wastewater that is not recycled is contained and shipped to another user who filters out the metals, dries and then recycles—metal and grit.

Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD) – Michael O’Keefe, President

Mike O’Keefe – MCAD is addressing campus needs for both parking and academic space. They are at capacity now. The 15-20 year vision is to put parking in a logical place and they engaged with Snow Architects to develop a parking site that will make sense for the college development plans long term. MCAD will return to the n’hood with final plans for approvals. Need feedback today. Before turning over the presentation to Julie Snow, Michael announced the MCAD Art Sale Nov. 30 It’s a big draw for MCAD and it is a busy weekend -- CTC has 2 shows and MIA has member appreciation. MIA will mitigate parking with off site parking and a shuttle to Wells Fargo.

Julie Snow, Snow Architects: Reviewed 4 possible plans which include a parking structure, housing and academic buildings. Currently 800 students with possible long range growth to 1000. The need for the plan is driven by parking but don’t want parking to be the determining element. Wants the campus to be “porous” to the n’hood— not too bordered by buildings. The block is too open at 26th and Stevens and they want to make it more inviting and have an entrance to the college more dominant. The priority to the n’ood is to enhance the 25th Street cut through campus. The 26th Street corner might be an area to develop a more defined sense of identity. MCAD wants more of a presence.

The 4 proposed plans incorporate several assumptions: MCAD having the two houses on Stevens. the demo of existing two four-plexes. Strategy 1 is parking on 26th street. Parking structure at street level and visible with an academic building. Housing would be added along interior side of existing ramp which is on 3rd Ave. Strategy 2 is put academic buildings along 26th St -- tuck parking inside the campus parallel to 26th St with housing on 3rd Ave. Strategy 3 is to build parking over the current MIA ramp on 3rd Ave ramp and add housing to interior face of ramp. This is the least likely scenario due to cost and engineering. Strategy 4 is trade the Liberal Arts building (1 story 50s building closest to the MIA new addition) to MIA for the former Whittier Health Care building and flat lot between 3rd Ave & Clinton. The plan would put a parking ramp and housing on the site. Would give MIA contiguous exhibit

space and MCAD the parking and housing they need. This puts the building closest to MIA in their usage and on park land. However strategy 3 & 4 are not being considered.

Comments: Good to have the street presence changed. The n'hood is always looking at the back door so now focus on inviting the n'hood into the campus. MCAD should look at other buildings to move and relocate housing instead of ripping down the existing ones. In a historic district, parking is a disallowed use for replacement but MCAD is being required to provide parking so there might be some negotiating room. The assumption is, if they put something lively on the 26th St side then it will help stimulate more activity and growth along 26th. There is potential for revenue by offering parking to the n'hood on weekends. MCAD needs to work on making the 25th St entrance more welcoming to students and n'hood.

Comment: would like to see parking off the campus and focus on students and academic space. Drop off areas could be built in to mitigate problems of students and faculty with large art pieces.

Can contact at Julie@juliesnowarchitects.com with additional comments. The current proposal for parking for 250-300 might include the MFA dept being put on the MCAD campus. This could add up to 200 students and faculty to the current demand.—Currently the MFA program is max about 65.

Southwest Transitway – Katy Doty and Kathie Walker

Kathy Walker and Kathie Doty work with the county on public outreach

Comments: The route (proposed light rail tunneled under Nicollet) is the worst idea that the city and county has come up with. Response: The final decisions are a long way off but the proposal is consistent with the regional transit plan to double transit ridership by 2030. The committee completed an alternative study in 2006 for the purpose and need for transit. They defined some alternative uses such as light rail, bus, etc. There were 13-14 alternative routes originally and have come down to 3 light rail options. Criteria are applied to all choices to evaluate feasibility. The routes were reviewed. The Access Mpls plan impacts the choices of light rail maneuvering and are unable to do light rail and buses on Marquette & 2nd, so light rail is moved back to Nicollet.

The Environmental Impact is now being evaluated for the proposed routes. These include affecting wetland, parks, light, vibration, as well as economic impact of businesses. Citizens Advisory Committee formed this past summer to provide input into Hennepin Cty and identify environmental impact and give n'hood positions. There is a question of a near 90 degree turn off of the Greenway onto Nicollet. Katy is checking on the radius needed to turn. Wheel squeal is one of the factors in the impact. Decision makers will look at the cumulative impact of all the issues including business, residential—noise, vibration, financial, historical significance, park and wetlands. Christian of Nicollet Ave Business Association (Spyhouse/Bad Waitress) said information needs to get out to the Asian businesses along Nicollet. All potential impacts need to be identified and put on the list to be included in the EIS. The impact of disruption, loss of business and businesses during construction is clear but what is the anticipated recoup time after construction—particularly with no stop along the primary segment of the retail on Nicollet? Would it be helpful to have a meeting with Nicollet Ave businesses for a brainstorming that would invite people from University Ave and the Hiawatha line to get their experience with the construction and planning? The greatest concerns are vibration, construction impact, threat to historical buildings, and traffic issues. The fourth alternative Park - Portland option presents issues of train gridlock at Fifth Street. BA members asked what is the appropriate action to take now (sending letters). The businesses need to learn from Lake St reconstruction and speak up now otherwise businesses will be in trouble. Feed information to Alex so he can get them on the radar for evaluation. There needs to be engineering steps taken to identify where utilities are. Nicollet is the identified route but depending on where the utilities, sewer lines, etc are, the route might move to the left or right by a ½ or full block—but still be called the “Nicollet” route. Buses and trolley were mentioned again as alternatives. No light rail AND trolley. Would be one or the other.

BA 1: The Whittier Business Association moves to oppose the proposed Plan 3C alignment (tunnel under Nicollet Ave from the Greenway to Franklin Ave) of the Southwest Transitway Light Rail route. Motion carried.

Whittier residents feel they are already served by buses and will not be served by the LRT due to no stops. The Midtown Greenway supports streetcars as connectors.

The objections from Kenilworth: Bryn Mar and Basset Creek support concept of LRT in that route. Kenwood and Cedar Isles Dean have more opposition but like the idea of getting to the Guthrie and downtown without

parking. Problems are that the route might demolish park land in area. A regular train already goes through the area and they plan on increasing their usage of the rails. The light rail would run every 7 minutes. The path is narrow through Kenilworth Trail near former grain silos and town-homes where the rail right of way is only 62 feet rather than 100 feet.

Adjourn 9:30am