

WHITTIER ALLIANCE – Business Association Committee – DRAFT MINUTES

Wednesday July 9, 2008 4:00 P.M. - 5:30 P.M.

AFC Mortgage 2110 Nicollet

Present Maurice Battle (Mpls First 7th Day Adventist), Tom Bissen, Arthur Buekner (Ranger's Security), Erica Christ (Black Forest Inn), Elizabeth Grzechowiak (AZIA), Mark Hockley (NICO Products), Jim Hubal (Edina Realty), Carolyn Humphrey (AAUW Gale Mansion), Darcy Knight (Old Arizona), Christina Le (Truong Thanh), Scott Mann (The Murals of Lyn-Lake), Julie Moline (HCMC), Pam Nordaune (MCAD), Vincent Peterson (Ranger's Security), Hassan Warsame (BP on Third & Franklin)

Presenters Amy Douma (HGA), Mike Harristhal and Deb Sweetland (HCMC); Lisa Edevold, Kate Kallal, and Chris Katayama (Tiger Sushi)

Staff Marian Biehn, Karin Knudsen

Call to Order at 4:12 pm by Erica Christ, followed by introductions of all present. Call for additions or corrections to the agenda: there were none offered. **Motion** to approve agenda **carried**. Those present were given time to review the June BA minutes, and Erica asked for additions or corrections to the minutes: there were none offered. **Motion** to approve the June 11, 2008 minutes **carried**.

Election of BA non-profit representative to the WA Board

Erica noted the BA representation on the WA board. BA rep Andrew Church has been transferred to a ministry in Blaine as of this month, **opening up a seat on the Board**. This is a one year term that started with the April meeting, and the elected representative would complete the rest of the term. The BA representative is expected to attend the Board meetings, as well as BA meetings, and also volunteer time on other task forces and committees. All motions from the committees go to the Board, where they are discussed and acted upon. The Board is also responsible for allocating the NRP funding allotted to the WA. **Maurice Battle**, of the Minneapolis First Seventh Day Adventist, expressed interest in the position. Maurice has been in the community for three years and would be happy to serve on the Board. (There is also a three year Board seat that is available to an open representative.)

Liz **nominated Maurice Battle** as the BA non-profit representative to the Whittier Alliance Board, seconded by Tom.

BA Motion 1: The Whittier Alliance Business Association elects Maurice Battle, of Minneapolis First Seventh Day Adventist Church, as the Business Association non-profit representative to the Whittier Alliance Board, term through March 2009. **Motion Carried**.

Spotlight on Business: Ranger's Security

Arthur Buekner, the sales representative of Ranger's Security, announced that they were new to the neighborhood. They offer all levels of security, including patrol, drive-by guards, uniformed unarmed guards, and other security equipment. Most of their current client base is out of St. Paul. Vincent Peterson is their business manager. For more information, go to rangerssecurity.com.

HCMC-GFI Site: presentation of proposed Family Health Clinic; Zoning Variances; Site Plan Review; Mike Harristhal and Deb Sweetland of HCMC, and Amy Douma of HGA

Erica introduced the presenters, and noted that HCMC has a purchase agreement for the GFI site. They are planning to move their Family Clinic to a new facility built on the old meat-packing plant lot. HCMC has been working with the neighborhood for the last three months, and is working with HGA Architects on the building and lot design.

Mike noted that HCMC's current Family Clinic is undersized for the amount of growth they anticipate. Through the development of this site, they would like the opportunity to grow and to become an asset within the Whittier neighborhood. They are in the process of due diligence, but need City approval before they close on the property. There have been advances in the project development since HCMC met with the BA in March. The current proposal reflects the input at various community meetings [BA, CI and Task Force meetings] as well as the things the City would like to see.

Deb noted the tremendous input HCMC received during the neighborhood meetings. They have tried to incorporate concepts and designs that the community pushed for. The planning packet has been submitted to the City, and this is the formal review period for community members. There will be a hearing on August 18. HCMC is excited to move forward with the design, and are looking forward to being part of the Whittier neighborhood. The submitted proposal speaks to some of the community input about the desire for green design, native landscaping, the use of brick and other materials, and the desire for something more eclectic than what was initially proposed. One of the next objectives is to create a community focus group: consisting of a multi-cultural, age-inclusive group—a wide demographic of participants that can represent the diversity of the Whittier neighborhood. The group will speak to some of the interior design and decorating of the building.

Submitted Proposal Design

Amy Douma presented HGA's design: HGA has noted the community desire for **green design**, and has incorporated more drought-resistant and native plants. They have included a rain garden to help filter the water from the paving and the building runoff. In response to concerns about solid paving and storm water runoff, they are proposing the use of **permeable paving** along most of Nicollet. The design will echo the paving used along the south entry and the drop-off zone, and should help to create a more pedestrian friendly feel. They are proposing the use of **pervious concrete** around the perimeter to help soak in rather than divert precipitation. Although pervious concrete is still being tested for its long term stability, they have included it due to neighborhood and City support.

The building will be located on the northeast corner of 28th and Nicollet. HGA has tried to respond to community concerns about how far along Nicollet the building extends by adjusting the building footprint. The facility will be 60,000 square feet on two floors. The entire site is 135,000 square feet. They will be providing 177 parking spaces; the minimum requested by the City. They will be providing a Metro Transit stop and shelter on the corner of Nicollet and 29th [For more detailed information, the large-scale technical drawings are available in the Whittier Alliance Office.]

Amy explained that in response to some community input, they have tried to make the facades more playful. The feature piece is a metallic box on the corner, flanked by brick/brick-look building. The **metallic box** will feature a variegated metal pane, although they are unsure what material will be used at this point. There are a number of finishes that can be used, depending on price point. They have tried to incorporate elements—such as **colorful glass squares**—that help to “break up” the façade and give the surface some texture and interest. The brick will use surface indentations and impression to help create interest and play with the light, at a pretty inexpensive cost. The glass squares will glow at night from light within the building. They front the labs and classroom which don't need traditional windows. The mechanical unit on top of the structure is backed off the main façade and hidden, but incorporates glazed glass to let in light to the rest of the building. The front courtyard was designed to be more transparent, so there is visibility into the plaza and into the areas used for more community-minded functions (like classrooms). There will be an overhead canopy and trellis, and some plants, and some seating blocks for public use. Part of the push for the use of windows, glass, and transparencies is to have lots of natural light to encourage a sense of wellness and healing.

Discussion

It was asked how **future development** will take place on the site if HCMC is developing the whole site. Mike responded that a visioning plan for phase development was developed in response to those concerns [a draft was available as a handout]. The HCMC would like to help establish a task force/focus group to discuss the potential development and land use options for the full HCMC-GFI site. The participants would identify the vision for the area and establish the future expansion of HCMC, such as the need for structured parking if the clinic were to expand. The ultimate goal is to have a vision for the long-term use and development of the site that fits within neighborhood concerns and goals.

Tom asked if the City was ok with the proposed large **parking lot**; it was noted that the lot would need a variance but that the City seemed to be in favor. The entryways to the parking: Amy noted there would be a two-way entry on Blaisdell, a one-way entry from 29th, and a one-way exit on 29th. The City requested that there are no entries/exits from/to Nicollet. Deb noted HCMC did a traffic study as part of the traffic demand plan, to look at patient and employee traffic management flow. The plan will be completed in the next 2-3 weeks. Deb noted that since HCMC won't have its own cafeteria, they will be encouraging employees and visitors to go into the neighborhood for dining.

The **fencing and landscaping** around the parking lot: Amy noted that the City prefers the landscaping to be the screening for the property. The exception is the mechanical structures and trash facilities that will be screened by a decorative metal mesh fence for security purposes. The concrete finish will use either recessed tile or metal to echo the color block look of the building. They are proposing different finishes and imprints for the concrete to help it be more engaging to pedestrians and passer-by. The garden space along Nicollet and the Greenway will include a retaining wall and screening to flank the rain garden. They will be providing 20 bike racks, but have not finalized the location yet. Deb noted they haven't designed all of the security features of the property yet. Erica suggested that, like MIA, it would be good to have a round-the-clock patrolman.

Liz thanked them for engaging the community in the design process, and for proposing a structure that is more exciting than the design of HCMC downtown. Marian commended HCMC and HGA for listening to the community comments, and for proposing a design that has a less clinical feel.

Erica noted that the information packet explained **why HCMC was asking for variances**. Each of the violations [of the pedestrian overlay] is partly related to the site size, partly because the site is so big the development can't meet the density requirements. Given the site design, the development is much in the spirit of the pedestrian overlay's goals and vision. HCMC will build the clinic on the site, and City will come back later and re-zone the property, so there is no need to approve the zoning at this time. HCMC needs to apply for variances from the City for the following zoning requirements as outlined in the pedestrian overlay document: building placement; accessory parking location, dimensions and driveways; minimum floor area; setbacks (corner cuts); and linear frontage. In response to a question about the

meaning of “accessory parking,” Amy noted that the term is used by the City to designate any parking that goes along with a building.

Liz **moved** to **approve all five variances** from the pedestrian overlay **as a slate**, seconded by Jim.

BA Motion 2: The Whittier Alliance Business Association approves the requested variances for the proposed Hennepin County Family Medical Center between Blaisdell and Nicollet and 28th and 29th St. as outlined in the HGA document (dated 7/3/08) for: building placement; accessory parking, dimensions and driveways; minimum floor area; corner cuts; and linear frontage for 1 use. **Motion Carried.**

HCMC-GFI Site Plan Review

Erica noted the Site Plan Review concerned the landscaping, the building materials, and the choices about how the building was sited on the lot, among other considerations. In response to questioning, Amy noted there wasn't a basement in the plans, partly due to cost restrictions. To go farther down in the soil on the site would require more funding for soil cleanup, etc.

Maurice **moved** to **approve the Site Plan** for the HCMC clinic, seconded by Erica.

BA Motion 3: The Whittier Alliance Business Association approves the Site Plan for the proposed Hennepin County Family Medical Center between Blaisdell and Nicollet and 28th and 29th St. **Motion Carried.**

Tiger Sushi 2—2833 Lyndale, in The Murals of Lyn-Lake; Lisa Edevold, with Chris Katayama and Kate Kallal

Lisa was present to talk about the plans for building a second Tiger Sushi. They currently have a restaurant in the Mall of America. They have been open five years in that location, and have experienced double digit growth every year. Tiger Sushi 2 is proposed in The Murals; the building itself will be opening in August.

Tiger Sushi 2 will be a full sit-down restaurant, with a dining room and small bar area. There will be 80-90 seats total. They intend to serve lunch and dinner, and be open from 11 am to midnight or so. There will be no live entertainment. They will be offering valet parking to their customers and have signed a lease with Intermedia Arts to lease space in their parking lot. The parking space would be available to those who want to drive themselves; there would be no requirement to use the valet service. The City requires them to have 28 parking spaces—the lot offers almost double. The target opening for Tiger Sushi 2 is mid to late September. Erica noted they are asking for support for their **request for a class E license:** for the sale of liquor, beer, and wine, with no live entertainment, no dancing or DJ. As part of the license, they do have to have a parking plan. Lisa explained they have signed a 3 year lease with Intermedia Arts.

Lisa described the floor plan briefly, noting that the restaurant borders Lyndale and the Greenway. The plans detail a kitchen, plus a dining room with a sushi bar in the center of the room which seats about 40 guests served by 4-5 sushi chefs. There will be table dining around the perimeter, a small bar with some high-top table bar seating, and some outside patio seating that overlooks the Greenway. Lisa noted their record at the Mall of America was excellent; they have held a liquor license there for 5 years with no problems. They have received the highest health rating from the Bloomington health department in their inspections. Lisa and Chris are the owners, and believe in a hands-on philosophy, where they are there to manage on-site. Lisa has a background managing 2 other successful Minneapolis restaurants. Chris has over 30 years experience as a kitchen manager and general manager. Lisa expects the menu to go beyond sushi, to offer Asian-fusion specialties created by head-chef JR. They estimate they will add 40 new jobs to the area, and look forward to being good citizens of the neighborhood and working within Whittier.

Discussion

It was asked if they see **regular returning customers** at the MOA, and if they anticipate those regulars coming to a new location. Chris explained that when they opened at the MOA, they were told to expect that 3% of the customers would be returns; they are averaging 30%. Liz asked if they were concerned about the **saturation of other sushi restaurants** within a short distance. Lisa explained that they were concerned at first, which partially explains their menu decisions—to go with Asian-fusion and sushi inspired but not sushi only. She also said she thinks that there will be a cluster effect: as an area becomes known for multiple, strong businesses of a similar kind (like Eat Street) it draws more people in rather than simply creating competition between the businesses. The Murals will bring in 150-200 tenants, and the development Blue has around 400, bringing potential customers into the area. Lisa anticipates hiring maybe 8 managers for the business. The dining space has around 1100 square feet.

Liz **moved** to approve Tiger Sushi's request for a Class E liquor license, **seconded** by Pam.

BA Motion 4: The Whittier Alliance Business Association approves the request for a Class E liquor license for Tiger Sushi 2 (28th and Lyndale, in The Murals of Lyn-Lake). **Motion Carried.**

Spotlight on Business: AFC Mortgage

Tom Nguyen noted AFC Mortgage has been in the location on Nicollet for 6 years. They serve people from all over the City, and do conventional mortgages. There is space in the building for lease.

Design Guidelines for Commercial Corridor

Erica noted that the WA has contracted with Lunning Wende & Assoc. to create the design guidelines for commercial development along Nicollet. To help pay for the consultants to create the guidelines, the WA would like to move money from NRP funds allocated for parking studies. When the NRP phase II strategies were determined, parking was a major concern (as it is now), but there have been parking studies done recently, as well as one funded by NABA. The parking plan component of the Business and Local Economy NRP Action Plan is currently funded for \$81,000.

The recommendation is that \$10,000 be moved from the NRP parking plan component into the NRP strategy that encourages and supports development along the commercial corridors. That strategy is currently funded for \$13,000. The money will help pay for the design guidelines, as well as the visioning plan for the area in the southern section of Whittier, near and around the GFI site [28th Street to the Greenway, between 1st Ave, Nicollet and Blaisdell]. The WA is looking to hire a professional consultant to recommend development and marketing that would benefit the neighborhood, as well as suggest land-use and development. Having those plans will help the neighborhood prepare for future growth. HCMC and the WA are helping to fund the visioning project, with the joint goals of promoting Whittier neighborhood development and meeting the aesthetic goals and needs of the HCMC clinic.

Maurice **moved** in support of the NRP's Steering committee potential re-allocation of \$10,000 from the NRP "Nicollet Avenue parking plan" strategy to the NRP strategy to "encourage and support development," **seconded** by Pam.

Erica noted that the visioning project and the design guidelines will be public processes; there will be neighborhood task forces and public meetings. Those involved will also come to the BA and CI at various stages in the projects' developments. If someone is interested in participating, please contact Marian at the WA office. Marian explained that part of the impetus for the projects is to help focus neighborhood discussions about new development positively. The guidelines and the visioning enable the neighborhood to clearly articulate the types of development the neighborhood would prefer, rather than responding to proposed development by stating what we do not want. The guidelines will help to create a vision for neighborhood development.

In response to a question about the cost of the consultants, Erica noted that Lunning Wende & Assoc will cost around \$20,000 total. The total cost of the south Nicollet visioning project is unknown, but the WA has applied for money to hire the consultants concerning the retail components along the corridor. Marian added that the Design Guidelines should be applicable to Franklin and Lyndale as well; they are trying to make the recommendations broad enough to apply to all of Whittier's commercial corridors.

BA Motion 5: The Whittier Alliance Business Association supports the re-allocation of \$10,000 from the NRP Phase II Action Plan "Business and Local Economy 1.1.1 Nicollet Ave parking plan" implementation, to the "Business and Local Economy 1.2.2 Encourage and support development on commercial corridors" and forwards the item to the NRP Steering Committee for further discussion. **Motion Carried.**

Scott Mann offered that he could host the next BA meeting at The Murals of Lyn-Lake on August 13, time to be announced. **Meeting adjourned** at 5:42 pm. Minutes submitted by Karin Knudsen. **Attachments:** none.

