

**Whittier Alliance Business Association Committee- Draft Minutes
Wednesday, March 10, 2010 4-5:30 at El Mariachi**

Present: Hank Jensen (CVS), Felino de la Pena (de la Pena Academy), Lisa Vecoli (MIA), Liz Grzechowiak (Azia), David Schuster (Lost & Found), Manuel Santana (Speedpro Imaging) Mary Anne Hoffman (Community Connections Partnerships), Erica Christ (Black Forest), Nimco Ahmed (Ward 6), Sharon Lund (Falls Agency) **Presenters:** Elissa Cedarleaf, Jim Hrabe, Lucas Hall (MCAD) **Staff:** Marian Biehn, Jessica Rosenberg

Call to Order at 4:15 by Erica Christ, BA Chair, followed by introductions. Erica recognized the Conflict of Interest & Standard of Conduct policies. The agenda was approved. The BA Committee Minutes of Feb 10, 2010 were reviewed and approved.

Spotlight on Business- El Mariachi-El Campestre – Mexican Village, Isidro Perez

Isidro can't be here, Marian will report: Isidro Perez owns Mexican Village: Marissa's Bakery (open 365), laundry, grocery store, deli. El Mariachi restaurant will be moving diagonally across the lot, so that it is open onto Nicollet. At the Monday CI meeting, he received n'hood approval for a Class B liquor license, which permits live music, dancing, DJ. El Campestre event hall will be moving to where El Mariachi is currently. The switch should be completed by early summer.

Mpls College of Art and Design – Elissa Cedarleaf Dahl & MCAD Students: Elissa teaches "Art in Community", to get students doing art outside of college, in n'hood. They've worked with St. Stephen's, Whittier Elem, Old Arizona, Kateri, etc. Students do a project individually with an org, and whole class does a project together. Elissa and Marian have been talking for a while about this project: Nicollet Vacant Storefronts. With economy down and businesses empty, students will design art installations to promote businesses, Whittier neighborhood, and make street look appealing, inviting, interesting. Joe says that on Sat and Sun students went out and talked to people, asking "What do you want?" for the neighborhood, for the community, for the future. They've documented about 200 responses (ex., more community pride, more ash trays). One idea is to share all of those responses over n'hood photograph, to start dialogue. Lucas is passing around power point with images of the possible windows. Felino mentions need for multi-lingual displays, especially Spanish. They've gotten answers in different languages, and want to display in original language. They are looking to present not just a window, but something in relationship to viewer. They have 3 months to put project together (semester ends May 6th), would love to have an opening, unveiling event: use one of the vacant spaces with finished interior, invite community in for art show, open mic, community dialogue and celebration (possible: 2109 Nicollet, space next to CVS has stage, has been used for events). MCAD students will do some of the cleanup, will also ask some business owners for some help clearing things. People in Whittier talk about potential in n'hood: what businesses we'd like to be here, what feeling we'd like to have here. Project plan includes making reusable things, so that project can be continued if businesses come into spaces. Class includes painters, photographers, graphic designer; sky's the limit for design. Budget: looking to print at MCAD for best deal, with discount. (4x6, \$100 without discount). What's made would be property of WA.

Questions/Suggestions: Liz wants to use this to help diversify retail; could have images of different potential retail (bike shop, doggy day care/wash), to help us, community, young entrepreneurs envision what could be there. Sharon suggests it would be great to coordinate opening with the next Eat Street Excursion (Eat Street businesses offer deals on two nights, progressive happy hour/crawl). They can make sculptural installation things in addition to banners, for unveiling or until a space is rented. Marian mentioned to not do anything too expensive in window, liability issues. Opening event ideas include: microphone/video for people to share their thoughts, visions, pop up store showcases for potential retail (Sharon was in touch with a scooter company who wanted to do this for first Eat Street Excursion). People shared

some of their goals for the images: show the different ethnicities, cultures, languages, communities, and people, and represent them in an interesting way; communicate to residents that there is a good college in the neighborhood; get MCAD students more involved in the n'hood. Azia tries to be conscious of who is coming in, sees locals late at night, but often clusters young adult renters and students. Are there barriers students see towards involvement? Joseph feels biggest barrier btw MCAD and n'hood is front door: they aren't asked by school or community to have interaction. This is why they are excited by project: chance to talk to people, which will be the basis of project. Class is excited to host opening and bring in community for that reason. Even if students are only here for a few years, they can still have sense of pride, artists can establish visual identity of that. Designs would be for both cars and walkers: big picture visible from road and smaller details for pedestrians. From commercial corridor stand point, this could make a recommendation to possible renters: you could be here! Erica questions if we have to be that literal? People looking to open a business are looking for feel in the n'hood, traffic, who is here? Seeing art, clean n'hood, people around will all be attractive things to business owners. Being too literal might be limiting. One value of doing this is to change the experience of Nicollet. We don't want to do all one thing, either way. Lisa says it would be interesting to make this a two way conversation: when you're on Nicollet, you're 2 blocks from top art college, top art museum, 17 languages spoken here, WFO. Some of that is hidden, or people don't connect them. How can we use web to make project more interactive? Website, twitter post, blog, so that people can join in to ongoing conversation. If twenty people want something for n'hood, we can come back to them when we have it. Can use n'hood org's contact and web presence. Manuel hopes that this will percolate, grow bigger. If there is strong buy-in on front and high expectations, this could go to other places. Erica says though there are budget limitations, the more the better: want to spread all along Nicollet. Budget? BA-CPED, MCAD have a little, or some creative thinking. Asking landlords? Participation and cleanup would be great. Some owners difficult to get on board. If we could get measurable results, could link leasing agents to this project. Manuel does wide form printing, can compete with prices, cover materials, work together on technical aspects; would like to donate some of his time. He also has contact with ad companies, local companies who might do product placement, not in your face, but for \$. Erica suggests come back to CI meeting for diff part of n'hood. Can we get the MCAD pres involved? This would build relationship, consistency. People think students are coming through, not staying, not worth asking. Joseph would like to be part of ongoing interaction, lasting dialogue, with community.

Annual Meeting: Approve budget, vote on board members, give good biz and good neighbor awards. Need nominations by 3/17.

Old & New Business **Façade Improvement Grant** – Matching funds, for lighting, doors, signage, painting, not landscaping, awning not preferred. Lyndale, 2-1. Nicollet 1-1. May 30th deadline. **BA-CPED grant** – Marketing Commercial Corridors. We have until 8/31 to spend it. We want to continue marketing vacant store fronts on commercial corridors. Need info, research, deciding. Vacant storefront project will be part of it, and we could also use some of that for ESE. Places will do it again, if we ask. Need to plan meeting. **May Day Soiree** - Thursday May 6th, Blaisdell Manor. Benefit for Whittier, fun party, entertainment, food from n'hood restaurants, cash bar, live and silent auction. Bring your friends, we need people to bid. We usually make over half of each year's unrestricted funds here. **Graffiti Removal** – Available removal materials. **CVS** brought gift bags. Manuel is also going to be working with MB on doing wraps on light boxes, with anti-graffiti cover so that graffiti can be easily washed.

Meeting adjourned at 5:15. Minutes submitted by Jessica Rosenberg
Next meeting: April 14, 2010. MIA. 11:30-1.

Whittier Storefront Project Notes

Opening event ideas:

- open mic: people sharing stories, ideas
- music
- pop up stores/businesses
- pair opening night with Eat Street Excursion night (possible April or May date)
- bigger/more involved/more expensive art installations that couldn't be up all the time

Themes for art:

- Potential for creative use of spaces, selling to new businesses/renters (either literally or by creative use of spaces)
- Promote n'hood assets: languages, diversity, community, MCAD & MIA
- suggestion/visual of other potential neighborhood serving businesses

Ideas to keep in mind:

- Enhance and promote feel of Nicollet and n'hood
- Online presence to keep conversation going and measure response
- Artists can check out Whittier Commercial Corridor Design Guidelines, attend Annual Meeting (April 8th) or Community Issues meeting (April 12th). And marketing study
- Lots of potential for project to continue after semester; into ongoing relationship between student artists and n'hood, or to spread to other n'hoods.
- put MCAD credit on window, Whittier Alliance website/contact info, rental agent info
- goal is to dress up/improve street-sidewalk view of empty storefront in order to get them rented—the window dressing is meant to be inspiration, fun and temporary. Not a permanent art exhibit.