

**Whittier Alliance Business Association Committee- Draft Minutes**  
**Wednesday, June 9, 2010 4-5:30, Azia**

**Present:** Liz Grzechowiak (Azia), Darcy Knight (Old Arizona), Valerie Aas (City of Lakes Waldorf School), Carol Pappas (Christos Greek Restaurant), Erica Christ (Black Forest), Sharon Lund (Falls Agency), Paul Jablonsky (Nicollet Car Wash), Nat Shea (Tanek), Hank Jenson (CVS), Felino de la Pena (Felino's Spanish Academy) **Presenters:** Rebecca Parrell (City of Minneapolis) **Staff:** Marian Biehn, Jessica Rosenberg

**Call to Order** at 4:15 by Liz Grechowiak, BA Chair, followed by introductions. Liz recognized the Conflict of Interest & Standard of Conduct policies. The BA Committee Minutes of May 12, 2010 were reviewed and approved.

**Spotlight on Business- Azia** is in its 7<sup>th</sup> year of business. The food is Asian fusion, and they have a huge wine list, the largest sake menu in the Midwest. 3-6 and 10-close everyday is happy hour. Azia's executive chef is Tom Pham. Liz is the Executive Director of the Phamous Group, overseeing the restaurants, including Thanhdo in St. Louis Park. Azia, the Caterpillar Longue, and A25 Sushi and Sake bar also host events; some exciting weddings coming up in the summer. The Caterpillar Lounge has DJs seven nights a week. They are on a busy corridor with a huge patio, so interact with the street a lot. The late night crowd is younger, urban, a lot of promotion is with social media. Week days they promote to out of town guests and businesses; weekends they promote to suburbs to bring in people.

**Facade Improvement Grant – Rebecca Parrell, City of Mpls Project Coordinator.** In 2008 the City of Mpls awarded Whittier Alliance a contract for the Great Streets Façade Improvement Grant. The program is administered by a number of groups, including African Development Center, Seward Redesign, W. Bway Association, S. Chicago Business Association, etc. The city creates programs with guidelines and process, and individual organizations add things. This is a matching grant, so does not add additional debt. Eligible areas in Whittier are: Nicollet Ave, Franklin to 32<sup>nd</sup> (the planners include an open Nicollet in extending this to 32<sup>nd</sup>) and Lyndale, I-94 to 31<sup>st</sup>. It goes one block in either way, to Blaisdell & 1<sup>st</sup> Aves around Nicollet. The program focuses on facades, trying to focus energy on the pedestrian environment, the look and feel of commercial corridors. The goal is to improve high-visibility areas, to pull in people. The program started in 2008, so we are starting to notice the impact. One example is Ted Cook's BBQ on 38<sup>th</sup> St. They updated the awnings, did a mural (grant covers artists), window decal signs, and lighting. Lots of people do new windows; create eyes into the building. On southwest corner of 38<sup>th</sup> and Nicollet, a boarded up building, property owner took out grant and now Blackbird Café is moving in. Center of Americas & Common Roots did a lot of tuck-pointing, which can be small, but cleans it up. The city encourages restoring and revealing historic features. Architect Bob Roscoe did the design guidelines, with drawings and pictures of encouraged and discouraged. On Nicollet, the matching grant is 1:1, on Lyndale it is 2:1. There are three categories for commercial areas: Monitored, Support, Intervene (limited intervene categories). Application process: Apply to Whittier Alliance, committee reviews, get two bids (encouraged to wait to meet with Marian and check on project eligibility before getting bids), all parties sign agreement.

**Attendee Questions:** What's the best way to get the money used? The first year was tough, next year more successful, building this year. Some orgs have always had something like this, Seward Redesign, for example: business owners know to go there when they are looking for funding. Kingfield-East Harriet has a volunteer who has done a lot of outreach, door knocked, helps people with paperwork. On W Bway, they had a business owner with 5 storefronts take out 5 grants, and as their organization is building, they had more applicants than funding. What's

worked is volunteer effort, getting the word out, seeing other people do it. Erica sees a lot of people on Nicollet, a few owners who are on their way out, not energized about improving street. Marian shows the virtual facade improvement posters: Whittier BA used a CPED grant to commission an architect to design simple façade improvements. 3 examples of 3 different buildings, with existing and proposed photos and design. The suggestions are small; a few thousand dollars grant would go a long way. Improving existing awnings is somewhat of a maintenance issue, Whittier encourages more long-term improvements than new awnings. Whittier is also partnered with Tanek and U+B Architects: Whittier Business NRP funds will cover up to \$1000 of architectural fees if you work with them, this is a great benefit to the program. Is there a real-estate tax impact? If you are doing an improvement, the assessor might come to the property and look, and it could improve the value of the building. But there is nothing about this grant that automatically links it to the city or taxes. Grant doesn't cover industrial or residential. Anyone thinking about applying? Old Arizona is thinking about installing opening garage door-windows. City of Lakes is thinking about a mural or windows. They would also have to consider historic building, which would give tax credits. WA just finished design guidelines, and there is the Pedestrian Overlay and Special Service District, which wouldn't officially impact but could serve as a guide and provide inspiration. The NRP commercial loan is also available, at 2%. Is the city doing this for the long haul, or looking to do it for 5-10 years? This is part of the Great Streets program, which includes Business Loans, Gap Financing, Façade Improvement, Business District Support Grants. When this was developed, there was no idea of sun setting, it was set up as a program. The money that is out to organizations has to be used. There will be a review and could be an extension, organizations can reapply as long as they have 80% of their dollars spent. Businesses can reapply. Does the grant include landscaping? No, many groups wish it would, but those things often aren't kept up, don't look good in one season. It could be up for review. Public art? If it is façade public art, yes, we really encourage working with artists. Sculptures? Not if they are free standing from the building. Please contact Rebecca and Marian with questions and for more information.

**Old & New Business: Open BA Seats.** There are still two open seats on the Whittier Alliance Board of Directors, one non-profit and one for-profit, please contact Marian or Liz if you are interested or know anyone who is interested. **Whittier Dining Guides** have been reprinted, please take some and display in your business. **Eat Street Excursion** – ESE happened on May 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, partnership with MIA. We heard from MIA that they were disappointed by their turnout that night, and we were affected by that. We had materials in advance, but we'd like to promote it even earlier. The Asian Food company is looking to get more involved, provide table tents and a deal for restaurants. We are looking to partner with MIA again for their July 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday, which is bike night; last year they had 3,000 people come through, their goal this year is 5,000. If businesses are interested, we could get marketing out earlier, and do bike valet. We have the signup-prize sheets, from both November and May. Who is interested in participating if we do it in July? We could do Thursday 8-11, Friday 5-10. One thing that slowed us up last time was getting the specials from restaurants, we need to hear from businesses sooner. Marian will email participants tomorrow. **Whittier Summer Events.** Pick up flyers for Whittier youth programs and fun, free events. Check out Theater in the Park on June 13<sup>th</sup>, Greenway Cleanup on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, WFO Historic Walking Tour on July 15<sup>th</sup>, Ice Cream Social on July 23<sup>rd</sup>, National Night Out on August 3<sup>rd</sup> (\$100 grants available), Peace Games on August 12<sup>th</sup>, Parade of Community Gardens on August 21<sup>st</sup>, Youth Field Day August 28<sup>th</sup>. **Bike Walk Week** The new takeout bike rack is coming to Nicollet to and 24<sup>th</sup>, possibly also to Nicollet and 27<sup>th</sup>. We at one point talked about Eat Street bike racks.

**Meeting adjourned at 5:26.** Minutes submitted by Jessica Rosenberg  
**Next meeting:** July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2010 at Lyndale Tap House