

**WHITTIER ALLIANCE - Community Issues Committee – Draft MINUTES**  
 Monday, February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2008 – 6:00 P.M. - 8:30 P.M. Whittier International Elementary School

- Present** Ahmed Ahmed, Nimco Ahmed (CM Aide), Jim Baker, Alex Bauman (WA), Shirley Bernu, Mary Cable, Erica Christ (WA). Yuyudhan Hoppe, Craig Laren (guest), Larry Ludeman (WA), Kris Martinson, Larry Miller, JoAnn Musumeci, Abby Noble (guest). Destin Nygard (CI Chair), Paul & Nancy Railsback, Jim Roscoe, Jason Samuels, Cynthia Wong
- Speakers** Attny Robert Speeter & Arch Phillip Brossard, City Planner Haila Maze, 5<sup>th</sup> Precinct Lt. Manty
- Staff** Marian Biehn, Josie Shardlow, Eric James
- Call to Order at 6:15 by CI Chair Destin Nygard. The Conflict of Interest & Standard of Conduct policies were noted. **Motion** to approve the agenda **carried**. A **motion** to approve the Jan 14, 2008 CI minutes **carried**.

**Community Comments & Discussion**

**Annual Meeting:** The Whittier Alliance Annual Meeting is Thursday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008 – 5:30-8:30pm at Whittier Int'l School. There will be resource tabling and mingling starting at 5:30pm in the cafeteria. The meeting is then held at 6:15pm in the Multipurpose Room. We would like volunteers and fresh input to have a successful meeting, contact the office if you are interested in helping!

**Nominations for Good Neighbor, Good Business:** A good business can be non-profit, for-profit, or any kind of institution in the n'hood. If they have done anything special in the past year let us know. Is there a good neighbor with an amazing garden or helpful around the block? Nominate them! WA will choose 3 neighbors and 3 businesses, so we need a lot of nominations to choose from. Winners will receive an award and certificate.

**Board Members:** WA invites the community to run for a board member position. An information sheet is available at the office for those interested. The commitment includes a three and half hour meeting per month, other community meetings, task forces (about 5 hours a month) and volunteer work for various n'hood functions and fundraisers. If you are interested contact the office and WA will put you in contact with current officers.

**Dog Days of Whittier – Saturday, 2-3:30pm** at Fair Oaks Park (southwest corner). S'mores, firepit, and bring your dog!

**Executive Director's Update – Marian Biehn:** There are issues coming forth that residents should be aware of. The first is the draft *Framework for the Future* which is what the City is recommending to replace NRP. It identifies how n'hoods will be funded and how they will achieve their goals. WA is asking residents to join our task force that will put together comments to be forwarded to the City. More info at the City's website and at WA office.

- WA is continuing discussion on the proposed Nicollet Avenue alignment alternative of the Southwest LRT Line. The first meeting is 6:30-8pm at the First Minneapolis Seventh Day Adventist Church. The LRT task force will put together comments to be included in the Environmental Impact Study. Erica reported the Board of Directors voted to send the LRT discussion back to task force at the January Board meeting.

- Marian noted the task forces will be short, concise, and ensure the n'hood voice is forwarded on.

The Chair noted WA staff is always available to residents for answering questions and voicing comments or concerns.

- Marian asked if anyone had news from their block like new neighbors, an event, etc. None responded.

**Rental Property and Home Improvement Loans:** Loans are still available for Whittier residents! The Single-Family Home Improvement Loan is available for owner occupied buildings up to four units. The "3R" (Rental, Rehabilitation, Renovation) Loan is available to rental property owners to do qualified fix-up for the welfare, safety, health and happiness of their tenants!

***Development Update, Marian Biehn:***

- **Former Butler Drug, W 26<sup>th</sup> & Nicollet:** Marian said Brad Rixsman of Pawn America has gutted the interior for occupancy and will be establishing a check cashing business on the 26<sup>th</sup> Street side with the rest of the Nicollet side for future retail or restaurant (currently no prospective tenants). The building has underground parking, an elevator and approx. 9,000 square feet. Brad has offered an interior tour to the n'hood.
- **Icehouse Redevelopment, W 26<sup>th</sup> & 2528-2548 Nicollet:** At the last Good Neighbor Meeting, Kandiyohi Development Partners (KDP) noted May as the start date of demolition. The Asian Video Store/Flower Shop/ Insurance Agency has moved across the street next to Seafood Palace. Businesses are relocating out of the property. Jasmine Deli is unsure at this time.
- **Sindbad Deli, 2528 Nicollet:** has closed likely due to hardship. Marian is not certain if they will relocate.
- **2833 Lyndale Mixed Use Development, Cooke Construction:** Residents voiced concern and confusion over what is being built. Marian said the City has not notified WA of any changes to height and clarified what is being built is what was approved as far as she knew. She also noted a previous misinterpretation of the plans and the perceived vs the actual location of the property line as it related to Vera's Garden. The Chair noted the façade facing the Greenway is the parking garage wall and the plans call for it to be covered by landscaping. Marian reported the developers are invited for next month's CI to do an update. The landscaping will be an important topic to focus on. Alex asked what is being built on the Garfield side of the project. Larry said they are two-story townhomes. Including the apts, the project is all rental with a total 192 units.
- **Eat Street Flats, Franklin & Nicollet:** Richard Minn, the sales agent, reports 50 sold out of 63 units. Retail space on 1<sup>st</sup> Ave has not rented.
- **Le Parisien, 2309 Lyndale:** Le Parisien is in bankruptcy and is renting the condo units.
- **Salem Church Redevelopment 28<sup>th</sup> and Lyndale:** The project is starting up again and by March or April the developer will present to the n'hood. WA does not know yet about changes.
- **Whittier Plaza, 2901 Pleasant:** A resident reported the building has graffiti on it and appears to have exterior work being done. Last the office knows there is a stop-work order on it and currently is in limbo. The resident commented it looks abandoned and is an eyesore.

**Transit Update, Nicollet LRT Alignment Alternative & Streetcar Proposal:** A resident asked about the status of the LRT alignments and the City's Streetcar proposal. Destin said SouthWest Transitway is not favoring any alignment at this time. However the suburban part of the line including Eden Prairie through the Golden Triangle job center has support and consensus. WA considers the Nicollet route as viable as the other two routes.

- The streetcar study completed last year by the City identified Nicollet. If the city were to start the project, Nicollet would be the strongest contender for a starter line. At this point there is no funding to go ahead with the project. It will likely not go forward if the LRT line is confirmed.

- A resident asked where they can access information on transit plans. Destin noted searching the City's website and the SouthWest is at [www.southwesttransitway.org](http://www.southwesttransitway.org). Alex said it is updated regularly.

**Whittier Calendar:** Josie reported a few calendars are still available for your neighbor or business.

**2848 Pleasant Ave – Karmel Village – Attorney Robert Speeter & Architect Phillip Broussard for Sabri Properties**

*Site plan review of 77 units site plan copies were distributed to the attendees:* The Chair recapped the plan originally at 92 units with the Council ultimately approving 77 units. This presentation regards the Site Plan and CI should pay attention to access, circulation, materials, landscaping, etc. Robert Speeter on behalf of Sabri Properties spoke. Speeter stated that the reduction of units was in recognition of opposition from the n'hood to the higher number (*note: the reduction of units was not offered to the neighborhood. It was presented in a letter to the Council the day on Jan 18, the date the zoning appeal was being deliberated at the Council. The n'hood was unaware of the reduction*) The number of parking spots has been reduced to 104 spaces. More bedrooms were not added but the same ratio of unit types are kept – as a result overall bedroom count is reduced. More common areas were added to accommodate tenants and children. The Site Plan is almost complete and will be submitted on Friday to the City Planner. The break down on the 77 units is: 37 2BRs, 24 3BRs, 7 4BRs, 9 5BRs.

Robert reviewed the building layout. The footprint has been reduced but not so much due to the need for parking and that there are units are on the perimeter of the building for eyes on the street. Robert said for the project to succeed financially they will stay at 77 units. Elevations were shown. There is a setback on the northeast corner so the height appears more similar to the building to the north. They have listened to residents' concerns and tried to incorporate them into the project. The second and third floors have common interior and exterior areas – some being on the roof area of the floor below it. All are green roofs. A resident asked if the green roof areas are accessible only by residents. Another resident asked about access for other units nearby. Robert clarified most of the tenants will be able to access the common areas. They are also trying to mitigate noise and ensure privacy. Due to insurance and safety concerns, there will be no public access to the common areas. He repeated that the developer has tried to incorporate concerns of residents and the developer's demands.

Phillip Broussard reviewed access and circulation details of the site plan including entrances and car access. Cars can both enter and exit at Grand or Pleasant. There is no more parking ramp but a ground-level circulating lot. A resident asked if parking will be charged. Robert said the units are for sale and the parking spaces may be sold. There is no hourly charged parking. She said a previous concern was that residents be able to have or afford a space, she noted the neighbors have been confused with the decision to go from rental to ownership. Robert said for two months he has been attempting to convey that the units are indeed for sale and not rent. Broussard confirmed the units are for sale. A resident asked about price ranges of the units. Robert said the units are \$225,000 on average for all units. Phillip noted there are 2 to 5 bedroom units, 850 square feet to 1600 square feet. A resident asked if they are all for sale or just a portion. Phillip confirmed again they are all for sale.

A resident living nearby voiced concern that with demand for parking in the area and that parking accommodation could go to "the highest bidder." He would like to see a commitment from the developer to see the parking spaces for the residents and the issue fine-tuned. Robert said he acknowledged the parking issue of the area and believes parking may be improved since people who live in the building and have a parking space will likely walk to work or shop across the street at Karmel Plaza – taking cars off the street. Robert stated management cannot police whether someone who purchases a spot and rents it out can be enforced. He noted his father in a condo downtown rents his parking spot out because he cannot drive. The resident pointed out some properties which use stickers or tags to identify resident cars and ensure only they park in the designated spot. Robert acknowledged the concern and said they will hope to address the issue.

A resident on the northeast adjacent to the property reviewed the height of the building. Phillip confirmed a 15 feet setback to his property and looking up, will see the top three stories of Karmel Village. The resident noted the edge of the wall is three feet away from his building. Phillip clarified the wall is actually four feet south from the property line. The resident's building will actually be slightly further away from Karmel Village than the setback. The resident brought up concern over the alleyway and whether access to his garage will be cut off. Phillip said they wanted the alleyway vacated for residents to use. Robert said it appears the alley will no longer be vacated by the City and the site plan is not updated to show that. The resident noted the City instructed them to talk to nearby property owners before they were given approval. Robert said he is willing to sit down and talk with owners. Phillip said he had not spoken to the property owners because the issue of the alleyway had not yet been resolved until that day. An easement is necessary for the 4plex owners to access their garage. (*note: a condition of the travel demand study is that the easement be established*)

A resident asked about traffic circulation. She has trouble getting down Pillsbury or Pleasant to go home and the additional Karmel Village traffic will be dangerous and make the area more difficult. She asked if they would reconfigure to limit access as entrance only Pleasant and exit on Grand. Robert said he will think about it and speak to the City traffic staff if it will make sense. He reported they were instructed by the City to have an egress on both entrances in order to prevent people from having to drive around the block. A resident noted the residents will realize on their own that access to Lake Street from Grand will be the most preferred due to a traffic light.

Alex said portions of the façade appear rebuilt on the plans and asked about efforts to build in the same brickwork pattern. Phillip said no existing detail is being obliterated. An example – the brickwork on Pleasant is being left alone. The southwest and north side brick however does not matter as much because it's poor quality brick with no way to restore the façade. They will coat it with a masonry coating, darker in color, and blending it in with the existing east side brick. A preference to match the brick and keep it as original as possible was stated. The masonry paint was unfamiliar to many of the attendees.

A resident asked about lighting. Robert said there will be lighting throughout the parking lot since people have to access it all the time. Though the parking is enclosed, someone can still be seen by residents. He noted there is no place in the parking lot where one cannot be seen. The resident clarified he was asking about light pollution to residents and to surrounding properties. Phillip described the interior bridge-way which will enclose part of the interior and that the front façade will not be fully opened to let light shine out. They will try to ensure to keep the lighting down.

A resident asked if marketing is being done to Somali community. Phillip said no marketing is being done but interest has been expressed. The resident noted at a prior meeting Phillip stated there was a confirmed long waiting list. Phillip said he did not say that but

that stating people who have expressed interest in the project could be thought of as a waiting list for the project. Robert confirmed several people have expressed interest.

A resident asked about condominium bylaws and on rules as to how many children are allowed. Phillip said a specific set of rules need to be adopted and of course they will create condo bylaws. A resident asked when the bylaws will be done. Phillip said it will be done in the next few months. Phillip noted the developer of the property will own it until a greater percentage of the condominium association takes over. He reiterated they were never marketing to Somalians exclusively. In regards to the amount of children allowed per unit, Robert said city code will apply which specify how many unrelated people can live. City code will naturally be enforced on the project.

Marian asked about plans for the lower levels-Greenway side. There is a stairway down to the greenway from Pleasant Ave identified and also daycare identified on the site plan for the lower levels. She asked where the parking and drop off is for the day care and how it will be licensed. Robert said daycare approval is not being sought at this time which requires a different CUP. Daycare will only be for the tenants. There is also room there for bike storage, exercise room, common space, etc. Marian asked if the lower levels will be left empty. Phillip confirmed there is no use at this time for most of the space. A resident said the need for daycare has been identified in the area and asked for the presenters to be truthful, should there be future plans for a daycare business, CI would like to address it now. Phillip said there is no consideration for a commercial day care. The resident asked how much of the space could become commercial space. Robert said they are not considering any commercial space right now. Bike storage would be useful in the meantime but no approvals are being sought for anything beyond. The resident asked how the space could become commercial. The Chair said it would require a change of conditional use, fulfilling parking requirements, zoning and other code. Phillip said R-5 zoning does not permit commercial uses and a variance would be needed. Josie said at the previous presentation, they stated the lower rooms needed to be sealed due to contamination. Phillip said there is no industrial pollution but a small portion which will be rehabilitated. The sealed off part of the lower levels is because of a steel support column that is too expensive to rehab.

A resident asked if there will be changes to the southern wall on the Greenway. Phillip said windows will be installed to 20 percent of the south facade. Robert said there will be at least one entrance onto the Greenway but nothing else planned. The existing building is built to the property line. Robert said the newest plan presented has not been brought to the Midtown Greenway Land Use Committee and if approval is not given for entrances, there will be no door. The resident suggested there is a desire for the public to use the area between the trail and the building and so not to disturb it. Robert said a previous plan would have included a walkway and easements with the County but he noted he does not want to promise anything they cannot deliver. She noted if the slope is disturbed, landscape mitigation will have to be done as a result. Robert said interesting sculptural ideas for the yard have been considered but would require approval of the County and Greenway Coalition.

The resident asked how storm water from the parking lot will be dealt with. Phillip said what is exposed at ground level is not an intense use of the land, but what is really exposed is the roof. Roof water will be captured and held in basins to be slowly absorbed into the ground. The remaining excess runs into the storm sewer. The resident asked what type of treatment is being done -- if they are vegetated swales. Phillip said the catch basins will be porous gravel and full of plantings. A resident asked about the north green space being a kid play area and whether storm water mitigation will interrupt it. Phillip said the filtering can be moved about the property. A resident asked if variances or approvals are needed. Robert said the building meets everything code requires and all numbers turn better (in terms of min/max requirements). A resident asked about designated play areas. Several designated areas were pointed out. Robert said each level will have common outdoor and indoor space. A resident noted the play area in the center of the parking lot will need fencing or kids will end up running between cars. Phillip said the speed of traffic through the interior is very slow but they will consider it. A resident asked, if the building had been expressed in the past to be for Somalians, how will they accommodate their families of 4-5 children. Robert pointed out the play areas and options for families to move about.

In terms of access, there will be a main public access and a resident access to the driveway. Phillip reviewed window cuts and design. He reviewed the renovations of the brick and wall facades and the masonry seal which tends to look like stucco. The Chair asked about the top floor. Phillip said the roof is raised slightly to allow living space on the top floor. He reviewed the elevation. The top floor is one foot taller than the existing floors. A resident noted R-5 zoning allows up to 56 feet and asked for the presenter to go on record stating the specific height of the building planned. She asked if the roof goes up to 48 feet. Phillip said the roof does go up to 48 feet. Robert said they have not changed the height; the building is 41 feet, 10 inches with the additional height to 48 feet to accommodate elevator and stairwell access to the roof. The resident opined the building is too dense and suggested the n'hood has to protect itself to what the potential of the building can be, as the developer could change their mind and go to the 56 feet allowance. She stated the residents have rights as well. Another resident noted a case where a developer added on an additional story and height even though the n'hood and city approved only a lower height. Robert said a CUP would be needed for an additional story. The point of the previous case was that the developer built a 3<sup>rd</sup> story without approvals.

The Chair inquired on other architectural details. Phillip said for every surface that is not brick, the material will be stucco. It will not be nearly as detailed as the drawing but they will make it to look like it fits the building. The stucco will be tinted to the existing brick color. The building overall will look significantly more modern. A resident commented on the blandness of the stucco in the area (Karmel Plaza) and voiced for more aesthetic appeal. A resident noted concern with the two-bedrooms being under 900 square feet and 5-bedrooms only at 1600 sq. ft., that the space is small. Robert said since they are for sale, it is possible for people to take a bedroom and combine or eliminate them. A resident asked about ramp access to the greenway. Robert said there may be an elevator to the Greenway level and currently there is a stair but no ramp access. Robert said many approvals are needed by the County for that and the developer will not depict such access until that is confirmed. The developer does support access to the Greenway in the future. Alex asked about the west façade. Phillip said it is an existing wall. To the north side there will be masonry work to fit the new garage doors.

The Chair informed the CI they are voting on site plan. **A resident moved:**

**CI 1 MOTION) The Whittier Alliance Community Issues Committee moves to deny the site plan review of 2848 Pleasant Ave due to unresolved issues with the site plan.** The resident initially included and then edited out the following text from the motion: *2) and that any site plan approved by the City details specifics such as apartment layouts, building dimensions, height/widths, play spaces, green spaces etc.*

**Discussion:** A resident suggested the CI include comments of what needs to be resolved specifically or the motion will not be informative enough. The Chair noted a motion need not address all individual specific concerns and that the Board considers additional information to the motion. A resident asked if the developer understands what the CI's concerns are. Robert responded he would like to know the specific concerns in writing. In regards to unit layout, he stated the n'hood group should not be micro-managing the interior layout of the building, as they are for sale condominiums. A resident stated the developers have never shown how the building fits in the context of the n'hood or surrounding landscape/buildings – and would like to see that. A resident would like to know when the units will be selling and how they would go about purchasing one. Robert said to contact Sabri Properties. The Chair said a few examples of the unit layouts would be helpful such as what a 5-bedroom would look like if the owner left it as is.

**CI 1 Motion) The Whittier Alliance Community Issues Committee moves to deny the site plan review of 2848 Pleasant Ave due to unresolved issues with the site plan. Motion carried 6 / 1 / 5**

The Chair said a site plan review approval is legally binding and up to the City to enforce the rules. The *resident moved a second motion* in reference to previous text edited out.

**CI 2 MOTION) The Whittier Alliance Community Issues Committee requests the City monitor building progress on any approved plans and verify approved specific details of the building are built. Motion carried 8 / 0 / 1**

The resident noted the motion regards concern over specific aspects of the building & opined the n'hood is tired of being taken advantage.

### **Minneapolis Comprehensive Plan, Draft Update – City Planner Haila Maze**

*Impact on Whittier n'hood, discussion, community comments:* Haila Maze has been working on updating the City's Comprehensive Plan. The legally binding document has been continually drafted and updated since the 1950s. The document is a general approval and relies on existing zoning rules and plans. The plan does not take dramatic changes from what exists currently. She reviewed the PowerPoint details available for copy from WA office. Each city in the Twin Cities is required to do a Comprehensive Plan as required by Met Council. Whittier 's future land use map was reviewed. Growth is focused onto major corridors (Nicollet Avenue, 26<sup>th</sup>, Franklin, Lake). Outlined areas are activity centers (day to night mixed use), with one at Nicollet and 26<sup>th</sup>. The Chair asked about Franklin Avenue. Haila said Franklin west is a more community corridor while Franklin east was more commercial. The street currently is a community corridor to Chicago (Marian noted that policy assisted in opposition over Wendy's establishment). Erica noted that the Pedestrian Overlay Zoning extends longer east-west than what is depicted on the map and the outlined activity center at Nicollet and 26<sup>th</sup> is too small. The Chair asked what the vision is for First Ave and Blaisdell. Haila said there is discussion about ensuring transitions are appealing between uses like residential and commercial streets. In terms of traffic, there is a street design team looking at categorizing every street. Guidelines in the Access Minneapolis plan also lock into the Comprehensive Plan.

A resident asked about attention to population growth. Haila said in evaluating existing zoning, the City has the capacity to hold a lot more people. She noted it is harder to predict where growth will happen as new residents would reside in existing buildings, redevelopment or infill projects – not new plots of homes. However the plan encourages growth around activity areas since services and facilities are located there. The resident noted growth will feed into many other aspects of social stability such as quality of life, police force, and comfort – and that the plan should identify how to manage growth and livability. She responded by noting the sustainable theme of the plan which looks at other various livability aspects such as arts and culture, transportation, and environmental design. However she noted there will be contradictions at times. The 45-day public review is due by Friday. The plan is nowhere near approved and will go through more rounds before final approval. She noted a new plan on Lyn-Lake will be worked on. A letter will be sent to ask for appointees for a Lyn-Lake Steering Committee.

### **Fifth Precinct Report – Lieutenant Gary Manty**

Lt. Manty is filling in for Lt. Frizell who is training at the FBI Academy. Manty will return to Sergeant after Frizell returns and he can be back on the street. CCP Safe Sarah Mahmud has been replaced by Chelsea Adams, who could not be present. The crime map may not look the best but overall the n'hood is doing well. There are no robberies, one burglary (which MPD closely watches). In comparison to last year, crimes are still down Precinct-wide. Last month there were a few arrests with some leads. The MO is generally three or four suspects in a vehicle threatening someone. Manty told residents to be aware of their surroundings as most crimes are in the evening (average 9pm-2am). Many times there are people who take advantage of intoxicated people after bar close (ie: Near Mortimer's, Rudolph's). So far the only major crime has been the single baby homicide. The cold weather has prevented people from getting out as well.

A resident noted some instances when loitering people are not dressed for the cold are likely trouble. Manty said right now the troublemakers are in groups of two or three. A resident asked what happened to people when arrested. They are held 36 hours in Police custody, and if the investigator has enough to charge them, they stay in. Sometimes criminals go away for a few years and sometimes not. A resident asked if the MO of a group of people is true or not. Manty said the same group is hitting multiple Precincts looking for opportunities. The reports have come from the victim only since they target individuals. A resident asked what happens to illegal aliens. MPD cannot deport people; that is up to INS. A resident asked about theft. Manty said a higher dollar amount has to be taken before MPD can dedicate resources. Contact Chelsea for more information on specific incidents: [chelsea.adams@ci.minneapolis.mn.us](mailto:chelsea.adams@ci.minneapolis.mn.us) Frizell is coming back March 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Meeting adjourned at 8:41 p.m.** Minutes submitted by Eric Fu-Wah James, Whittier Alliance.