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COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PROGRAM  
Application  
Jan. 2014 to Dec. 2016

CONTACT INFORMATION:

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IV COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PLANS

**1. Evidence of organization's eligibility:**

The Whittier Alliance has been previously recognized as an eligible neighborhood and has received funding from CPP. The boundaries of the Whittier neighborhood are Franklin Ave to the North; Lake St to the South; Lyndale Ave to the West and 35W to the East.

**2. Community Participation Efforts:**

The Whittier Alliance has fostered and will continue to foster opportunities for open communication and participation. As trends and life styles change in the community, different approaches are added or adapted to reach and engage more stakeholders.

Proposed Outreach Activity:

- \* Community Meetings to present and solicit information for neighborhood decisions
- \* Neighborhood Communication Network (people) & Social Media (tech) expansion
- \* Community Events & Activities to build neighborhood awareness and loyalty
- \* Forums & Seminars to Educate for broader civic influence

Whittier's adopted Neighborhood Priority Strategic Plan identifies Stakeholder Engagement as one of 6 priorities. A Stakeholder Engagement Task has been established and, in addition to the usual outreach methods, targeted outreach and engagement activities are being implemented.

Whittier residents, service and faith based organizations, rental property owners, law enforcement groups, schools, institutions and businesses are part of a broad engagement

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process. The Whittier Alliance facilitates, and invites community participation in the monthly community meetings. At these regularly scheduled meetings, all attendees have “voice.” Meetings are publicly noticed via postcard mailing, electronic mailings, website posting, door-to-door fliering, and through our Neighborhood Communication Network. The broader community is invited to all meetings but areas particularly affected by an agenda topic are targeted for more intense distribution of information.

Beyond meetings, other outreach activities and events are and will continue to be part of Whittier’s Community Participation effort to engage, build community and build awareness of the neighborhood. The Whittier Alliance builds community and invites alternative engagement by hosting or co-sponsoring events such as: Dog Days of Whittier, Art in the Park, May Day Soiree, spring & fall neighborhood clean ups, game night, youth field day and summer potlucks. We will continue to educate Whittier stakeholders and foster civic participation through candidate forums and voter registration drives meant to build more influential community participation. The younger demographic of the neighborhood calls for more frequent and smarter use of social media outlets for information distribution as well as a call for participation. Lastly, team door knocking with the community organizer with a 3 point targeted message has recently been reintroduced as a method to put a face to the Whittier organization.

### **3. Building organization capacity**

The Whittier Alliance uses its Strategic Plan and the balance of its NRP Phase 2 Action Plan as the Neighborhood Priority Plan. The Strategic Plan areas of focus - Stakeholder Engagement, Housing, Historic Preservation, Environmental Sustainability, further & smart Development of the Commercial Corridor, and Organizational Sustainability - paired with the NRP Action Plan strategies of Housing, Commercial Corridor, Community Building, Youth & Safety provides endless opportunity for the Whittier Alliance to build capacity and benefit from the talent within the neighborhood.

The Whittier Alliance recognizes that meaningful progress on the “planned work” as well as work that walks in the door is not achievable with 2.5 staff. The Whittier Alliance proposes that beyond the continued effort to increase attendance at meetings and events, the following action will be taken to expand capacity:

- The Neighborhood Communication Network will be expanded from the current 30 to 60 network contacts
- The Network will be utilized to help gather data from residents and business to facilitate implementation of the Strategic Plan, distribute block and neighborhood information, and assist the Whittier Alliance with building Whittier awareness
- Organizational capacity will be built by direct invitation, announcements at community meetings, the Whittier website and social media.
- People with leadership skills will be identified to help build buy-in and move initiatives forward
- The Whittier Board will continue to act as ambassadors to the neighborhood

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- The Whittier Board and staff will monitor the Strategic Plan implementation steps, seek interns, specialists, or professional assistance as needed to assure volunteers are receiving the needed support and build capacity
  - Opportunity to contribute will be open to all capacity levels
  - Opportunities for youth involvement will continue to be invited
  - Bi-lingual volunteers will be utilized to welcome, inform and encourage participation

#### **4. Building Neighborhood Relationships:**

The Whittier “The International Neighborhood” has many characteristics. We measure our diversity by ethnicity, culture, age, race, profession, educational background, economic, housing, lifestyle, etc. The Whittier neighborhood numbers 13,689 residents. Our information indicates approximately 1/3 of the residents move each year. Building a livable neighborhood of engaged residents representing all sectors is the desired yet challenging goal with a fluid population. People turn out for meetings that affect them directly or events that interest them.

The Whittier Alliance will continue to work toward a whole and inclusive neighborhood by:

- Implementing the stakeholder engagement components of our Strategic Plan
- Promoting civic awareness and engagement through a voter education, registration efforts and candidate forums
- Working with housing providers and rental property owners to communicate Whittier opportunities and events
- Networking with service providers, parks, and schools to identify programs and opportunities that encourage community interaction
- Offering food at meetings & events for mutual hospitality
- Offering events like the Youth Field Day, Dog Days of Whittier & Clinton Field Ice Cream Social, and provide a comfortable and spontaneous format for fun, games and interaction
- Offering & inviting opportunities for cultural discussions and sharing of customs
- Working with the active and diverse retail and commercial businesses in Whittier, as well as developers and real estate professionals, to strengthen the commercial corridors and fill vacant store fronts with neighborhood preferred services
- Expansion of the Whittier Business Directory and the For Sale/Lease component of the directory [www.whittierbusiness.org](http://www.whittierbusiness.org)

The Whittier Alliance will extend and accept invitations to collaborate with other organizations and neighborhoods, and partner with private and public entities. Collaborations and partnerships that will be continued or introduced are:

- Collaboration and alignment with Lyndale, Lake St. Council, Midtown Greenway Coalition, Central & Phillips West, Neighborhoods, Hennepin County & Minneapolis:
  - 35W Access Project,
  - reopening of Nicollet Ave and Lake Street commercial corridor,
  - Greenway & Nicollet Ave Transit Access studies
- Collaboration and alignment with Stevens Square and Loring:
  - Franklin Ave & Franklin Ave Bridge visioning and renewal

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- Nicollet-Central Transit Access
  - Partnering with the Lyndale Neighborhood for a shared Somali-East African Outreach coordinator
  - Minneapolis Park and Rec: Whittier Park programming and Washburn Fair Oaks Park master plan
  - Realtors and Leasing Agents: Filling vacant storefronts with neighborhood preferred business
  - Neighborhood enthusiasts such as Joan Vorderbruggen who initiated and implemented the very successful Artists in Storefront program which resulted in 7 storefronts being leased and multiple local artists being showcased
  - Private developers and the City of Minneapolis: Develop a long-term, environmentally-friendly resolution to parking demand along the commercial corridor
  - Minneapolis Institute of Arts & Minneapolis College of Art and Design: Collaborate on cultural and creative projects and links to Eat Street
  - 5<sup>th</sup> Precinct Police Law Enforcement Group (LEG): Our on-going collaboration with the LEG has resulted in longer sentencing for offenders and a more informed, safer neighborhood
  - Faith base groups, youth serving organizations and service providers

The Whittier Alliance will work to strengthen partnerships at all levels to improve livability and respect for diversity, facilitate better civic decisions, and build awareness and appreciation of the Whittier and Eat Street brands.

#### **5. Involvement of Under-Engaged Stakeholders:**

There is always work to be done to engage the underrepresented populations in the neighborhood. The Whittier Alliance will continue to seek out new ways to engage and inform residents who are unaware of the neighborhood amenities, changes that will impact their lives, or events that could engage them on a social level.

Similar to other neighborhoods, the Whittier Alliance has identified immigrant and minority populations and young adults 18-25 as under engaged. The Whittier Alliance will continue to offer participation in ways that have been successful in the past. We have seen growing participation in events by a broader representation of the Whittier neighborhood in events and opportunities such as:

- neighborhood clean ups
- community gardening
- Youth Field Day and Summer ice cream socials
- Game night
- Artists in Storefront events such as the Bridging Festival and walking tours

The Whittier Alliance does not have the capacity to provide direct social, housing or educational services. However we will continue to update and provide a list of agency and service resources to assist residents in need. In addition, we will continue to access the language and cultural resources of the NCR department. We have found these services valuable and efficient.

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## 6. Housing Activities:

According to the 2010 Wilder Report, Whittier has 7446 housing units, 772 of which are single family homes. The yearly median income for a Whittier resident is \$32,000, and the average rent is \$700 per month. Our Strategic Plan outlines goals for housing in Whittier for the next 5 years and targets single family homes, zoning, multi-units, historic preservation, and affordable housing.

Single family homes and family housing are limited in the Whittier neighborhood. We continue to lose families and residents who prefer to live in Whittier but cannot find housing to accommodate a change in lifestyle or family size. In order to support the neighborhood school, stabilize the neighborhood, provide broader in-neighborhood housing options for residents, and to increase the inventory of single family homes and larger size units, the Whittier Alliance is or proposes to:

- Retain the services of an intern or housing specialist to do an inventory of single family homes that have been converted to duplexes and encourage the return to single family living
- Work with the City to down zone areas and incorporate R1 zoning (no R1 or R2 zoning exists in Whittier)
- Market the single family home improvement loan to improve livability and curb appeal
- Work with realtors to promote the Whittier neighborhood to potential buyers from within and outside of the Whittier neighborhood
- Assure that the commercial corridors provide neighborhood amenities and the parks are safe
- Work with CPED and Hennepin County to secure and purchase vacant lots (funds in place)
- Work with the City on boarded and vacant buildings to rehab and sell to owner occupants
- Retain the services of a consultant to research and complete a Historic Preservation Guide for homes in Whittier highlighting the economic, environmental and historic value of retaining and maintaining older homes.
- Retain the services of a professional to explore further historic designations, broaden the district, or create a conservation district
- Create a loan program for historic preservation and restoration

Whittier has long been a rental neighborhood and that will not change. Work within the rental community has been and will continue to be an important aspect of Whittier housing choice and valued housing stock. Work in the area of multi-housing includes and will continue to include:

- Marketing the Rental Rehab & Renewal Loan for code compliance, tenant livability, and curb appeal
- Working with identified problem properties to improve management practices
- Safety seminars for residents
- Sponsoring quarterly rental property owner seminars
- Continue building a directory of rental residents for communicating neighborhood events and amenities
- Work with developers to incorporate larger units in new developments

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Whittier is an affordable neighborhood. Over the past several years several properties have either come forward to renew affordable housing covenants or to be designated affordable in order to receive advantageous tax credits. This concentration of affordable, supportive, and transitional housing is one of the highest in the City. It is our experience that the “designated” affordable units have management issues that put them on the problem property list within the neighborhood and absorb excessive staff and police time. This problem erodes a block and a neighborhood. With this type of impact on the community, the Whittier Alliance will:

- Work with the City’s Affordable Housing Trust Fund to evaluate funding process and awards, and explore application or policy changes to balance distribution
- Until housing equity is achieved, discourage the addition of designated affordable, supportive and transitional housing in the Whittier neighborhood
- Encourage properties with expiring Affordable Housing Covenants to return to market rate
- Work with housing organizations to inform them of housing goals for the Whittier neighborhood

Housing and housing related programs, discussions, and activities account for approximately 50% of the work of the Whittier Alliance. We have purposefully integrated all aspects of the Strategic Plan. An engaged and informed community supports a healthy commercial corridor which supports healthy housing, etc.

**7. Unused Funds:**

Unused funds will not go unused. Current unused funds indicates that we have been more efficient than anticipated; were able to use volunteer help rather than pay for the services of a consultant; or an initiative was postponed due to another issue taking priority. The Strategic/Priority Plan calls for levels of expertise that will have to be contracted and we anticipate an accelerated use of the allocated funds.

**8. Budgets:**

The budget for the Whittier allocation of \$394,733 is part of this submission. The budget will reflect expenses that are associated with things that happen to the neighborhood to which we need to respond, such as: the 35W Access Project; Streetcar studies; development proposals; and unanticipated livability, safety, human rights or natural disasters. It will also reflect expenses initiated by the neighborhood in the Whittier Strategic/Priority Plan that Whittier stakeholders have identified as important to neighborhood development.

**9. Comments:**

Whittier Vision: A World Class Neighborhood

Mission: The Whittier Alliance is dedicated to building a flourishing and distinctive neighborhood

The Whittier Strategic Plan was designed to push the limits and vision of the Whittier neighborhood. Many of the goals are ambitious but are so intentionally. The Whittier neighborhood wants to be an innovative example to other neighborhoods and the City of Mpls.

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ESTIMATED BUDGET

<b>CPP Budget</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
Staff Expenses	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$75,000
Employee Benefits	\$13,000	\$13,000	\$13,000
Professional Services	\$ 7,000	\$ 7,000	\$ 7,000
Occupancy	\$18,000	\$18,000	\$18,000
Communications/Outreach	\$ 7,000	\$ 7,000	\$ 7,000
Supplies and Materials	\$ 4,000	\$ 4,000	\$ 4,000
Meetings/community building events	\$ 4,591	\$ 4,591	\$ 4,591
Development	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000
Fundraising	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000
Other Services	\$	\$	\$
<b>Total for contract:</b>	\$131,591	\$131,591	\$131,591
Neighborhood Priorities	\$	\$	\$
<b>TOTAL:</b>	\$131,591	\$131,591	\$131,591

Notes:

- Staff expenses should include payroll, FICA, and withholding, and contract staff.
- Employee benefits should include any health insurance, retirement, or other benefits.
- Professional services should include the cost of temporary contractors, bookkeepers, accountants, etc.
- Occupancy should reflect costs related to rent, utilities, phone, websites and email expenses, and other similar expenses.
- Communications/Outreach should include costs of publications, printing, postage, delivery, flyers, etc.
- Supplies and materials should include office supplies as well as expenses for supplies related to ongoing programs such as block patrols, etc.
- Meetings and community building events can include those costs related to community meetings and events (excluding food and entertainment).
- Development expenses could include costs related to training, education, recognition, or orientation for board, staff and volunteers.
- Fundraising could include any costs related to fundraising for your organization (hiring of consultants, costs of materials, postage, events, etc.).