



Fort Wayne Plan Commission  
200 E. Berry Street Suite 150  
Fort Wayne, IN 46802

June 6, 2021

**RE: REZONING ELECTRIC WORKS GARAGE AND APARTMENTS**

Dear Commissioners:

The developers of Electric Works have provided substantial outreach to West Central Neighborhood Association members, leadership, and other neighborhood residents for us to both better understand and to collect insights into the remarkable redevelopment of the former General Electric campus. We appreciate the developers' taking on the Herculean task of redeveloping this property and the positive impacts it is already having on West Central and Downtown.

Of course, the devil is in the details, and West Central wishes to ensure that important details that could adversely affect the neighborhood are addressed in the planning and approval process to ensure the best possible outcome for all affected parties. In that light, we ask the Plan Commission to examine the following issues and not only understand their implications, but also find solutions that do not undermine the substantial private investments already made by others in the neighborhood, nor diminish the safety or quality of life of residents.

**Architectural Compatibility**

We appreciate the developer's efforts to relate the new construction to the architectural imagery of the former industrial campus. We appreciate their setting back the upper floor to reduce visual massing.

Although the proposed widening of Lavina Street will push new building masses farther from existing homes across Lavina, there still remains a substantial disparity in scale between the proposed and present residences (located in the West End National Register Historic District). This disparity can overwhelm the current modest, and very human current scale of the street. The proposed tall buildings on the south side of Lavina also have the potential to permanently shade the existing residences north of Lavina. We ask that the developers look into ways of reducing the physical massiveness of the buildings fronting the north and west sides of the property, or, at the very least, further articulating the building walls into smaller architectural masses and divisions. We ask that a shading study be conducted to assess impact on existing homes, so that their solar access is not permanently lost.



Of course, we would expect the new streetscape incorporate neighborhood streetscape features, such as park strips planted with street trees and incorporating pedestrian-scaled street lighting, as renderings are suggesting.

### **Transportation**

We recognize that a garage supporting nearly 1200 parking spaces is a necessity for Electric Works to become successful. We support the developer's efforts to wrap it with residences so that its adverse visual qualities are muted. We appreciate the widening of Lavina Street to make a strong connection to Broadway. The increase in vehicle traffic resulting from this development will be more challenging to positively manage.

We are concerned with congestion that will come at the Broadway/Lavina intersection, especially during heavy use periods after site employees' work days begin and end. This has been a chronically difficult intersection because it is at a point where Broadway changes angle and where sight lines are compromised. It has a history of traffic accidents. We hope that transportation studies reveal a need for a traffic control signal here to both facilitate Electric Works traffic, but also bike and pedestrian movement from the neighborhood to the Downtown core.

We assume that traffic counts on all the streets south of Washington, west of Broadway, east of Garden Street, and south to the rail elevation, will increase. The question should be by how much, which streets would bear the brunt of the traffic, and at what times in the 24 hour cycle. Washington School and Emmanuel St. Michael schools have well developed protocols for delivering and collecting students at times when these same streets may see increased traffic serving Electric Works. We must ensure that Electric Work's traffic needs do not adversely impact school childrens' safety, nor the tranquility of the surrounding residential streets, especially south of Washington. We ask the Commission to require a modeling of traffic movement likely to result from this development, and investigate ways to modify the present street system to minimize adverse impacts on safety and congestion.

The master plan shows a new road connecting Jefferson at Swinney Park to the SW garage entrance. This could divert a significant amount of traffic using Jefferson and some surface streets. A comprehensive study of traffic in this area will help understand if this is a good idea, and, if so, when it should be implemented.

On the edge of West Central is the Broadway/Taylor intersection, presently functioning at a D level of service, which is pretty bad. We anticipate this to become even worse (if that is possible) once Electric Works is operational. A transportation study was commissioned in recent years by the City to examine means of improving the function of this intersection. The study proposed that a roundabout would bring the intersection to level B service. Perhaps it is time to revisit this study and examine this intersection in light of the influx of new activity to the area.



### **Neighborhood Parking**

Although in theory the garage will provide sufficient parking spaces to serve Electric Works, it must be remembered that on-street parking is in high demand in West Central, especially on the streets near the proposed development. It is not only important to maintain existing parking being used by present residents, but to find a way to ensure residents' parking access is not strangled by Electric Works visitors who choose to not park in the garage. Remember that there are empty homes and some vacant lots in the project's vicinity, so even current on-street parking use is not at full demand. Many homes in this area lack sufficient off-street parking, especially in multi-unit houses. We request a study on impacts to on-street parking, and if conflicts are likely between neighborhood resident needs and Electric Works needs, that a way be found to ensure that neighborhood residents receive first priority for on-street parking near their homes. Many cities solve this problem by providing resident parking by permit. We believe this idea should be examined as a part of the parking impact study we request.

We very much want to see Electric Works succeed in its efforts. At the same time, we enjoy the present historic qualities, livability, and character of West Central. Rezoning this site opens the door to adverse impacts not permitted under the current zoning, and this is why we ask these issues be examined, so that the devil in the details can be ferreted out and leave a winning project for all parties.

Thank you for considering and protecting the neighborhood's interests as you deliberate.

Sincerely,

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