

West Central Neighborhood Association

Meeting Minutes

July 17, 2023, 7:00pm

Attendance: 33 people

Joel Sauer, President, introduced himself and the board members and the mission of WCNA:

“The vision of the West Central Neighborhood Association is to create a friendly environment that is rich in history, culture, diversity, and community that is valued by its residents, business owners, and visitors.”

Joel discussed that historic preservation is every member’s responsibility. We have to be diligent with watching over our history. Please report all new construction or renovation to the Historic Preservation Committee (or to Joel or any board member, who will pass information along to the HPC) so that they are aware and can ensure that all changes have been approved.

Introduction: Craig Leonard will chair the Historic Preservation Committee that is mandated by our WCNA bylaws. Craig introduced himself and shared his history in West Central. He shared that he’d like to offer a refresher course on tax credits available for owner-occupied historic residential.

Electric Works Update– Guest speaker: Kevan Biggs, Developer

He would like to make a tour of the project available to the neighbors so that we can see and understand all of the elements of the project. The goal is to get to 90% of the space leased by the end of 2024. There are new leases in the pipeline with 2 currently in negotiation.

Q: Is there any residential planned?

A: Apartments were planned for Phase 1, but that building was then occupied by Do It Best. Now the first component of residential will be in Phase 2 (296 apartments) that will surround the current parking garage and a second building that will be along Broadway. This building will include senior (55+) affordable housing– 59 units. The project has slowed down due to the increase in costs and interest rates. There is a new investor who requested an affordability component, and so decided to invest in all of the apartments, including the senior affordable housing and market rate apartments. They added 30 more affordable units for those who are 50% area median income of any age (it is a sliding scale based on household size).

Q: Did the aesthetics of the housing project change?

A: The final products and drawings are not yet available. There are some changes from the initial drawings, but it will still include masonry and the same detailing on the windows that was in initial drawings.

Q: When will you break ground?

A: They are ready for closing in late August and will start construction right after– goal for early Sept.

Q: I appreciate the quality and quantity of bike racks. They are all a little too close to a wall or building to fully park the bike. Will the new building on Broadway have ground level retail?

A: It appears the operations team is already aware based on the bike audit. And yes. 2 retail spaces designated for future entertainment retail (ie restaurant) and fitness.

Q: The meat and seafood market left. Is there a plan for a new one?

A: We are working on it. B&B wasn't able to be successful with the newness of the project and their limited hours/high prices.

Q: Was the fitness component originally supposed to be a climbing gym?

A: A local guy posted that he was going to do it, but it didn't come to fruition with that particular operator. We would still love to have one on the campus, but nothing is currently in the works.

Q: Are there any plans for the GE Club?

A: The plan for the bowling alley is a speakeasy theme bar/restaurant. It will preserve 4 of the bowling lanes and outfit them with new pin setters. It is paused currently while they find the right operators.

Q: The vendors are not always open during the stated hours. Is there pressure for vendors to stay open?

A: Yes. Which times are most problematic?

A: Tuesday evening, Sunday evening.

Q: What's happening with the gymnasium?

A: I'd love to give you a tour. The gymnasium is completed, fully renovated. The bleachers have been removed from the sides, but some remain for historic preservation purposes. It is being used for meetings, banquets, etc. It is a leasable space.

Q: What are plans for improving conditions of Swinney Ave and the viaducts?

A: (Joel) Swinney is going to get a major sewer improvement project, so they will not do repairs until after that project is complete. The blacktop is temporary, and it is protecting the brick until it can be replaced. This is all the responsibility of the City rather than the Developer.

Q: What's happening on East Campus?

A: It will be the next phase to turn our attention to (design work, etc) but the current focus is on finishing the leasing of the West Campus.

Q: What is this rumor that Electric Works is going to fail?

A: We are not failing nor about to close!

Neighborhood Greenways Intro:

Chris Leonard (neighbor)

Kevin Brooks (Three Rivers Active Streets)

The group was started to address safety for pedestrians and other non-vehicular travelers. Speed limit for all non-arterial streets is 30mph even though anything over 20mph is dangerous. A neighborhood greenway is a traffic calming initiative that promotes streets that prioritize people walking, biking, and rolling. Quiet, low traffic, low speed streets. A slow safe route to connect neighborhoods to parks, schools, and business districts. The initiative includes slower speed limits, signage, and curb extensions that shorten street crossing distances. Why do we need a neighborhood greenway in West Central? Promote pedestrian safety, healthy community, people of all ages and abilities should feel safe exercising and traveling without a car. We could be a model for other neighborhoods by completing the city's first neighborhood greenway.

Possible immediate actions: posted 20 mph speed limits, sharrows marking (painted street marking indicating that bicyclists may be present— as in “share the road arrow”)

Longer term items would include curb extensions and speed humps.

Tour Update: Ellen shared the tour line-up and the music line-up. \$18,000 in sponsorships! All the information is on the neighborhood website!

The Neighborhood Block Party is coming up on July 22 from 11am to 2pm at Moody Park! We are still looking for volunteers!

Sneak preview of upcoming meetings: Geoff Paddock, our representative on City Council will be at our August meeting. The September meeting will be canceled.

Concluded: 8:23PM