

West Central Neighborhood Association

Meeting Minutes

March 18, 2024, 7:00pm

Attendance:

Joel Sauer (President) welcomed everyone to the meeting and reviewed the mission and vision of the 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.

Public Art Piece Commemorating Art & Artists in West Central

- Mark Smith has started a new foundation, The Hemphill Smith Art Foundation, in honor of his late wife, Jody.
- His mission is the creation and maintenance of public works of art and to provide college scholarships for Indiana students interested in a career in the arts
- He would like to create a sculpture in the neighborhood, funded by this foundation, to honor the history of art in the neighborhood. The piece will be created by Cary Shafer.
- It will be located in the triangle bordered by Swinney Park Place, Jefferson Blvd, and Garden St. It would include new sidewalks, which create a missing link to connect to Electric Works. It will not impact any existing trees.
- The sculpture is based on a painting by Jody Hemphill Smith. As proposed it would be 40' high and 20" wide, made of painted metal.
- There will be lights to illuminate it, and a concrete "West Central" gateway sign in front.
- Many approvals are still required! Fort Wayne Arts Commission, Fort Wayne Parks, Fort Wayne Right of Way, Fort Wayne Planning & Development, Fort Wayne Historic Preservation Commission
- Projected timelines: Spring/Summer 2025
- WCNA wrote a letter of support for the project, which does not commit us to any money or fundraising efforts
- Discussion of further integrating the identity of the neighborhood into the sculpture, including considering that the size and scope of the sculpture does not detract from the historic homes. It was suggested that spaces to sit could be including around the sculpture.

- Discussion: the newer trees along W Jefferson were intentionally planted to grow into a canopy that creates a tunnel effect along Jefferson. We should consider how the addition of a sculpture would affect the plans for this canopy.

Thieme Overlook Updates & Discussion

- It is located at the corner of Thieme and Rockhill. It is on the National Historic Register because it was part of the Fort Wayne Park & Boulevard System built in the early 1900s
- Theodore Thieme was the founder of the Wayne Knitting Mills, who lived on the corner of Berry and Rockhill. He commissioned the creation of the overlook because he was displeased with the view and debris along the river. He hired George Kessler to create the overlook
- Thieme Overlook is maintained by FW Parks & Rec. They have committed to removal of invasive species, remove all dead vegetation, repair & refurbish the balustrades
- It is currently full of graffiti, when viewed from the river. The Parks would clean it up, but it would likely be re-tagged. It has been suggested that the neighborhood commission a natural-looking mural
- Other ideas have been proposed: creation of a boat landing, including a series of steps for access and seating

Mechanics Bridge: has received funding to be fixed!

Historic Preservation Committee Update

- More requests are coming in for solar panels on historic buildings. The City HPC requested guidance from FW historic neighborhoods on this. Our WCNA HPC organized to provide a letter with proposed guidance on approvals for this.
- Tom Cain: The guidance was the solar panels should generally not be visible from the public right of way. There will be some cases in which protecting the historic architecture will be more important than allowing installation of solar panels. This follows the National Historic Register guidelines.
- Next WCNA HPC meeting is 7pm on Tuesday, April 2, 2024 at the downtown library.

H&G Tour Update

- The 2024 tour will be September 7th & 8th, always the weekend after Labor Day!
- Co-chairs: Ryan Benton & Ellen O'Connor Sauer
- Ticket prices will be the same as last year. \$18 presale and \$20 day-of
- We will not be doing a pre-tour party this year, due to increasing costs and high demand for planning and volunteer time and energy. We'll see how it impacts the

tour and volunteer participation, and consider whether or not to reinstate the party for the next year

Other Business

- History of the West Central Neighborhood (during a future meeting, TBD)
 - Presented by Creager Smith & Nate Lefever
- Jaenicke Gardens (Japanese Garden)- A look at the past & present (June Meeting)
 - Presented by Alec Johnson, Deputy Director of Park Planning, FW Parks & Rec

Please share speaker recommendations for future meetings with any of the board members!

Concluded: 7:57pm