

West Central Neighborhood Association

Meeting Minutes

November 17, 2025, 7:00pm

Attendance: __ people

Joel Sauer (President) welcomed everyone to the meeting, introduced board members, 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.

Joel welcomed new neighbors and members.

Guest Speaker: Geoff Paddock, 5th District City Council

- He has 45 neighborhoods in his district, tries to go to all of the association meetings.
- Deputy Chief Steve Hafner of the SW quadrant is also here.
- Derek Camp, Wayne Township assessor is also here
- Geoff would like to improve SWAP- make it more relevant and stick to an agenda
- Discussed opposition to budget cuts for 2026; Geoff voted against all of these. But says he's still pleased with the overall budget that passed. Still includes infrastructure projects
 - 7-8 million year 2012 for infrastructure for the whole city
 - 42 million for 2026, still a little less than 2024-25.
 - Kept funding for brick streets and alleys: \$500,000.
 - Added police officers; trying to reach 510 total officers
 - Budget cuts won't impact the number of police and fire fighters as they have in smaller communities
 - Net loss of about \$25 million due to property tax cuts
- Going to continue to work on Riverfront Development, return on investment is \$4 to \$1 spent
- Traffic: acknowledged problem of speeding. Beginning to use traffic division to pull over speeders. A traffic signal is coming at Sweet Cars plus a roundabout at West Main. He says they are working to lower speed limits.
 - A neighbor brought attention to the presence of schools on Washington & Jefferson. The lights are not timed to adjust for school zone speed limits. Another neighbor pointed out that our homes are closer to the roads than in other areas of the city that have problems with speeding, increasing urgency of the problem.

- A neighborhood request flashing signs to add to school zone
- 136 traffic stops in WC since August

Question: How many jobs are being added with the Google Data center?

- A: 20-30 at the beginning, possibly up to 300. They are expecting to gain significant property tax revenue from the data center. He's concerned about the diesel generators, which is under state jurisdiction.

Question: What is the status of reconstruction of W Jefferson where the pavement is sinking above the buried trolley tracks?

- Geoff doesn't know of anything on this project. Tom Cain asked for communication with engineering so that we can build traffic calming into the project.

Yesterday in West Central: Theodore Thieme

- 1857-1849 born in Fort Wayne to German immigrant parents
- Built the Arena Dinner Theater house (formerly art school museum)
- Went to NYC to become a musician, and pivoted to going to pharmacy school
- SW corner of Wayne and Columbia bought a drug store, the second floor was an art school
- He got into textiles after visiting Germany and learning that tariffs were coming to the US. In 1890 he opened the Wayne Knitting Mills (originally on the corner of Main & Clinton) and relocated in 1895 to West Main. He instituted profit sharing for all his employees.
- He used to walk from his home on W Berry to the Mill past the dumping ground at the river, and was inspired to build the Thieme Overlook. Dedicated in 1911
 - It was a demonstration project to demonstrate what could be done to improve the riverbanks all over the city
 - Built the Thieme Mill in Los Angeles in 1925

2026 Elections: led by Al Hofer, Past President

- 2026 Slate of Officers:
 - Joel Sauer, President
 - Kelly Benton, Vice President
 - Bethany Pruitt, Secretary
 - Chris Todd, Treasurer
 - Anita Kuker, Membership

The Slate passed unanimously.

Vision Statement

- The current statement is at the top of this document.
- The Board approved a new statement with the purpose to be more concise and include "historic preservation" in the wording.

- New: “To preserve and promote a unique, historic neighborhood defined by its connected community, rich architecture and outstanding livability for all.”

Holiday Party: Monday, December 8th from 6-9pm at The Fairfield downstairs in the Barrel Room

Updates on Neighborhood Grant: The website to give feedback is still open- this phase of the project is almost over. Google “Engage Fort Wayne Connected Neighborhoods”
The next step is Dan Baisden presenting the feedback and choosing a project.

Announcements:

- Washington Elementary is having a food drive for their pantry November 21st.

October Gift Direction

- Guidelines
- Proposed: Toys for Tot (has over 3,000 kids signed up). Passed unanimously.

Concluded: 8:12 pm