

## **West Central Neighborhood Association**

*Meeting Minutes*

*February, 2026, 7:00pm*

Attendance: 34 people

Joel Sauer (President) welcomed everyone to the meeting, introduced board members, and reviewed the mission and new vision of the WCNA:

*To preserve and promote a unique, historic neighborhood defined by its connected community, rich architecture, and outstanding livability for all.*

### **Welcome & Introductions.**

- Business Member Spotlight: Dignity Memorial
- Guy DePuis, David Sassanella brought treats and shared information about their business

### **Yesterday in West Central: Transportation History in WC (Tom Cain)**

- Slides available on [westcentralneighborhood.org/association-board-meetings/2026-minutes/](https://westcentralneighborhood.org/association-board-meetings/2026-minutes/)
- How did people get around West Central?
- Walking! Narrow lots made for shorter distances between places.
- Horse and carriage: few people in WC owned their own horse.
- Roads that were dirt, sand or gravel (horses didn't need payment) plus horse manure led to the creation of brick sidewalks. There are few remaining brick and stone slab sidewalks in the neighborhood
- Street rails: In the 1890s overhead electric lines were installed to power street cars
- There were trolley lines on Main St, Washington & Jefferson, making WC a desirable location
  - With the development of gas/diesel powered buses, it no longer mattered where the rail lines were located
- Paved roads: automobiles were most for wealthy people at first, and WC carriage houses were converted to garages
- Bicycles drove the desire to pave streets. Bicycles expanded mobility for women (around the same time as the suffrage movement)
- The bridge over St Mary's River at Swinney Park was built in the 1920s and opened downtown to the west side of town. That stretch of road was incorporated into the US Highway System. Wealthy people started to leave downtown after this to more suburban areas and the houses started to be divided into apartments

- 1950s Cold War Era: The focus shifted to creating space for cars to come in and out of downtown and park. We lost a lot of historic buildings to create parking lots. One way streets were created to get cars out of downtown quickly in case of nuclear attack

### **2026 Final Budget**

- Joel presented the approved 2026 budget. It is the same as the proposed budget presented in the January meeting. You can find a copy of the budget on the website

### **Connected Neighborhood Grant Update (Kelly Benton)**

- Kelly (and others) met with the City, who presented options for projects based on neighbor/resident feedback
- Projects that impact West Central include: curb bump outs near Washington Elementary, flashing school zone signage near Washington Elementary, additional lighting within the interior of Moody Park, internal pathway at Swinney Park connecting the Rivergreenway, trail lighting on the Rivergreenway between Main St bridge and Bloomingdale Park, pedestrian refuge island and/or landscaped medians on Main St between Union St and Cherry St
- Next step is for the City to estimate costs

### **WCNA Program Spotlight: Beautification (Kelly)**

- Please apply! We have funding and never use up everything allocated in the budget
- Must comply with HPC regulations.
- See application and program rules on the website
- We will reimburse 50% up to \$500 (increased from \$300 last year)
- Also see Sidewalk & Curb Program, Home Security, Tree Program

### **Home Tour!**

- Ryan Benton is the Chair for the Home & Garden Tour this year
- The most important things this early are getting home & sponsorships
- Reach out if you want to volunteer for a committee! No meetings are scheduled yet
- Send your leads to [info@westcentralneighborhood.org](mailto:info@westcentralneighborhood.org)

### **Winter Mixer is next Monday. Please invite your new neighbors and join us!**

**Casino discussion:** The Board has posted educational resources on the website for neighbors to educate themselves. The Board will not take a position on the casino until/unless it is determined that it will directly impact the neighborhood.

### **February Gift Direction**

- Every month we give \$250
- Last month the donation went to Forgotten Stones (affiliated with InAsMuch)
- Giving guidelines: (from photo)
- Nominations: Tall Rabbit (Blue Jacket), WBOI,
- Blue Jacket/Tall Rabbit was chosen

Concluded: 8:05 pm