



## Historic Centennial Neighborhood Association

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August 20, 2010

Wabash River Enhancement Corporation  
200 N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street  
Lafayette, Indiana 47901

Dear WREC,

Historic Centennial Neighborhood Association expresses our support for and commitment to the proposed Region of the Great Bend of the Wabash River watershed implementation project being submitted by the Wabash River Enhancement Corporation. Like WREC and our partners, working together to provide responsible solutions to resource issues is a key aspect of our organization's mission.

Historic Centennial Neighborhood is Lafayette's oldest residential and mixed-use neighborhood. It was platted in 1829 as the first addition to the town of Lafayette which was platted but four years earlier. Our western boundary is the Wabash River. Therefore the neighborhood development was directly related to the Wabash River and subsequently to the 1843 arrival of the Wabash and Erie Canal adjacent to the river and in 1853 the tracks of the first railroad, the Chicago, Indianapolis and Louisville Railroad (the Monon), were laid down the middle of 5<sup>th</sup> Street. From the 1840s through the early 1900s, modest to elegant homes, community and commercial buildings and churches were constructed in a variety of architectural styles. The neighborhood association recognizes the treasure trove of historic architecture as its principal asset and strongly encourages the *conservation* of this irreplaceable resource. The neighborhood supports the repair and rehabilitation of historic structures for modern usage. Symbolic of this effort, thirty-four Wabash Valley Trust for Historic Preservation historic (sycamore leaf) plaques recognizing outstanding preservation and restoration have been awarded to Centennial buildings. This number of plaques is by far much greater than in any other neighborhood. Historic preservation is the cornerstone of the Historic Centennial Neighborhood Association's mission: to preserve and enhance the quality of life of Lafayette's oldest neighborhood thereby making it a destination place to live and work.

We are aware of the large amount of litter on the streets, sidewalks and other surfaces in the neighborhood. If left on the ground, it is almost certain that much of this litter of paper and plastic washes into the sewers. Being the oldest Lafayette residential neighborhood, it is not

surprising that most of the sewers in the neighborhood are combined storm and sanitary sewers. Thus during storms the litter would flow directly into the Wabash River. A Historic Centennial based project is being discussed in which the neighborhood's St. Boniface grade school children would staff an applied research project to systematically collect and quantify the amount of litter potentially entering the storm sewers. Quantification would determine if this amount of litter represents a problem. If yes, in phase two of the project an educational program to remedy the problem would be formulated and implemented. Historic Centennial Neighborhood's initiative to keep litter out of the storm sewers might be a model for other urban neighborhoods to emulate. Is it a complete stretch that solid litter of paper and especially plastics is not contributing to a garbage island somewhere downstream?

Historic Centennial may also serve as a testing ground for the introduction of a rain garden and rain barrel program. Because of the small size of yards in the neighborhood, the current standard design for a rain garden may need to be redefined. This type of "green" activities fits with the neighborhood's overall green philosophy. Historic preservation and restoration of the built environment is fundamentally green. The revitalization of an urban neighborhood as a destination place to live and work utilizes existing municipal infrastructure and thus conserves resources. Indeed revitalization and reuse of the urban core is one strategy to reduce urban sprawl and its associated additional tax on the watershed.

Indicative of Historic Centennial's continuing support and involvement in all aspects of watershed and urban waterfront improvement, Historic Centennial Neighborhood was instrumental in identifying and supporting the Brown Street bicycle-pedestrian bridge as WREC's top priority development project as part of their urban corridor planning project. This bridge would connect the neighborhood to the Heritage Trail, the riverfront and beyond by providing clearance over the rail corridor barrier. The eastern end of the bridge would be located in Historic Centennial and in general the new bridge would be located on the site of the original bridge over the Wabash (a covered bridge).

Historic Centennial neighbors have contributed many in-kind hours of support to WREC through project planning and focus groups associated with the previously described activities. Two neighbors are on the WREC Steering Committee and they plan to continue to volunteer their time to this endeavor. The Historic Centennial Neighborhood Association believes in the work that WREC has already completed and will complete in the future. With this in mind, we plan to contribute \$12,000 in in-kind service while serving on the steering committee, helping promote urban practices throughout the neighborhood, and through development of an urban waste quantification project with WREC.

With appreciation and commitment to these projects,

Sincerely,

Phyllis J. Hunt, President