



Views

from the Park

INSIDE

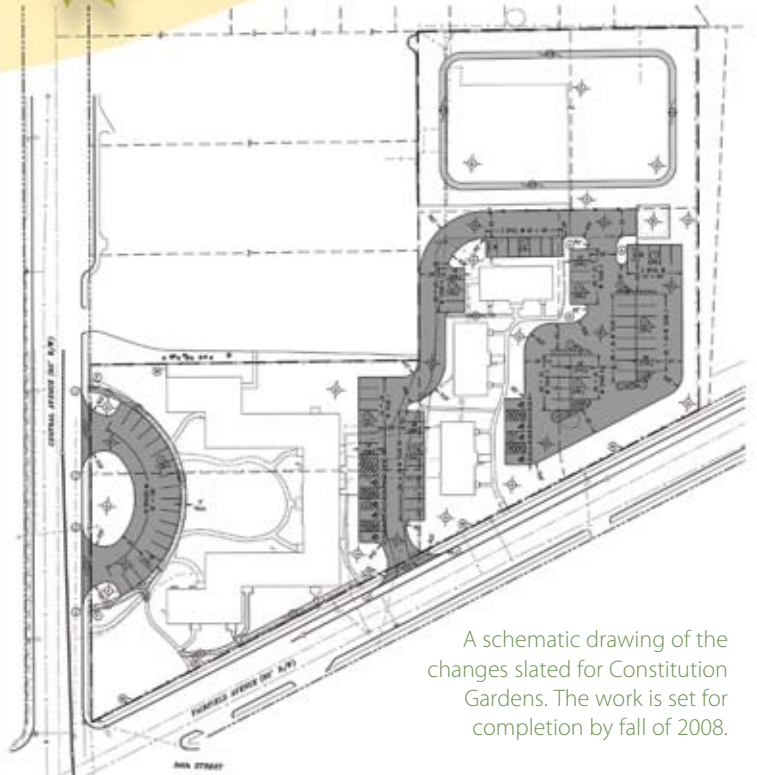
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AUTUMN IS UPON us. We'll soon see winter's first snows dusting the streets of Watson-McCord and another year will be behind us. It's been a fantastic year for the neighborhood and I want to thank all those who volunteered this past year and helped make our many activities the success that they were. It really has been a group effort, and none of it could have taken place without you. As we move into a new year, I am confident that many of the changes you'll read about in this newsletter will affect our small part of the city for the good.

I hope you agree. Happy reading ●



Scott Vankirk,
President,
Watson-McCord
Neighborhood
Association



A schematic drawing of the changes slated for Constitution Gardens. The work is set for completion by fall of 2008.

Full Steam Ahead for Re-Development

by Dan Kraner, Watson-McCord resident

LOCATED AT THE corner of Central Avenue and Fairfield Avenue, the apartment complex known as Constitution Gardens has been vacant and in decay for the

past several years. Residents of the Watson-McCord neighborhood have questioned the viability of these properties as a renewed apartment community because of criminal activity and

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Neighbor to Neighbor

Betti Kahn Lurie reflects on a fun-filled childhood on Central Avenue ... in 1916.

by Brenda Havens, Watson-McCord resident

IT'S NEEDLESS TO SAY that the Watson-McCord neighborhood was a completely different place in 1916. The world was a different place. Europe was embroiled in World War I. Democrat Woodrow Wilson had narrowly won the presidential election. Samuel Moffett Ralston was Indiana's governor, and the population of Indianapolis had just exceeded 300,000.

It's rare to find anyone, let alone a neighbor, who remembers any of this—unless you're talking to former neighbor, 91-year old Betti Kahn Lurie.

Betti was born in 1916, years before many of the current houses in Watson-McCord existed. Her parents, Ann (Berman) and Isaac 'Ferd' Ferdinand Kahn had built a "California Bungalow" on one acre of land at 3534 Central Avenue when they married, and Betti lived in that home until she went to Smith College in 1933. Thirty-fourth Street was the dividing line. North of that point, the houses were larger. "You had an acre of land and you didn't think twice about it," Betti recalls. While the house itself has been leveled in favor of newer construction, Betti's memories of an adventurous and enlightened childhood remain vivid.

Betti's father owned the Capitol Paper Company downtown (now the Bemis Company, Inc.). Her mother kept house with the assistance of a hired staff. There was a chauffeur who also functioned as her father's valet.

Betti, her sister and her parents were members of the Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation, which was located downtown at the corner of Market and East streets at the time. Other than immediate relatives, the area didn't have a strong Jewish presence. Betti doesn't believe her Jewish faith came into play at all in her relationships with other neighborhood children.

What fun the neighborhood kids had, Betti says with a chuckle as she describes how the children spent every moment of their free time outside — inventing games, establishing mock turf-battles, and organizing jacks tournaments. Central Court was the perfect location for many of their activities because of its very limited traffic flow. She comments that kids'

activities today seem far more organized than they were when she grew up — a time when neighborhood children made their own entertainment. There also was far less adult supervision back then. Parents just



Betti Kahn Lurie



Betti's childhood home located at 3534 Central Avenue. A daycare center is on this property today.

Photo courtesy of Bass Photo Co. Collection, Indiana Historical Society

made sure you had something to eat at the proper times: “You had to be in at 5:30 to wash up in time for dinner at 6:00,” Betti says.

“Central Avenue wasn’t paved back then, of course,” Betti explains. End-grain wooden blocks, about the size of bricks, were laid tightly together to form the street surface. If there had been a lot of rain, the blocks would swell and pop out of place. “With all our nice houses and large yards, our biggest entertainment was watching the cars motor by and seeing the blocks fly — whizz, pffft.”

From 1921 to 1933, Betti attended Tudor Hall, an all-girls school that was founded by Fredonia Allen (also its first principal) and Reverend James Cumming Smith in 1902.

Tudor Hall and the Park School, known as the Brooks School for Boys, merged in 1970 to become today’s Park Tudor School.

Tudor Hall was located on 32nd Street between Meridian and Pennsylvania streets. Every day Betti walked to and from school in her uniform (a two-piece skirt and blouse).

“The public school kids who attended school at 32nd and Pennsylvania streets would boo and make noises as the “Tudor Hall kids” walked by,” Betti says.

After school, when the uniform was exchanged for street clothes it was back to romping with the same kids who had earlier razzed you, Betti recalls.

Education was important to Betti. She particularly remembers her principal Miss Allen well. “She was very tall and had long hair that she piled on top of her head,” Betty recalls. “We had a lot of homework and had to study hard. I took over the den at home as a place to study.”

Tudor Hall had an excellent reputation and a diploma from the school

guaranteed entry into the college of her choice. Betti chose Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts.

While at Smith College, Betti met and married Lewis Lurie in 1935. The Luries remained in Massachusetts until 1937 at which time they returned to Indianapolis so Lewis could join Betti’s father, who was in ill health, at the paper company.

When the Lurie’s returned to Indianapolis, they chose to build a home in the Williams Creek area, near 82nd Street and Washington Boulevard, where Betti still resides. Betti and Lewis raised a son and two daughters in their Williams Creek home. Lewis passed away in 1986.

Today, Betti enjoys her eight grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren. When asked how she makes 91 look so easy, she replied, “I’m lucky I have my health. I keep active.”

However, she recently gave up tennis. “I just can’t run anymore,” she said matter-of-factly, but still plays golf twice a week. Betti will proudly tell you, “I’ve been golfing for 80 years.”

We’re proud to have had Betti as a Watson-McCord resident for 17 of her 91 years. ●

mark your CALENDAR

The Watson-McCord Neighborhood is planning its **Annual Holiday Party for Thursday, December 6th beginning at 6:00 p.m.** Delicious food, drink and a silent auction are all part of the fun. Plus, a special presentation by Neighborhood Association President, Scott VanKirk will be given. This is a festive opportunity to share your holiday spirit and talk with neighbors. Watch for a postcard in the mail with all the details. ●



Have a Healthy Halloween

October is a time when most families think about witches, ghosts and goblins. For health-conscious parents, those fun thoughts can turn into scary ones as they picture their children gorging on sweets. Here are some **FitCity** tips for a healthy Halloween:

- Focus on the fun and fantasy, rather than food.
- Host a Halloween party rather than going to one. That way you can plan a healthy menu.
- Do some jumping jacks or run in place while standing in line for the haunted house.
- Hand out boxes of raisins, granola bars, fake tattoos or stickers – a healthier option and a way to avoid sneaking treats.
- Serve a healthy snack or meal before heading out to trick-or-treat to avoid overeating.
- After the big night, encourage your child to share the treats with others – or trade them in for money or a new toy.
- Teach your children about moderation. Let them pick out their favorite goodies and save the rest for later.

While trick-or-treating comes around just once a year, healthy habits stay with you the whole year around. For more information on how to make a healthy move, visit www.fitcityinfo.com ●

For the Birds

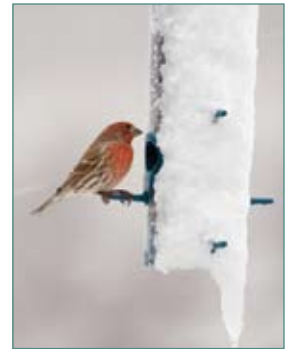
When winter has left trees barren and daylight hours are few, birds still fill our suburban landscapes. We marvel at the resourcefulness of wild birds as they search out food and warmth through the long winter months.

The Watson-McCord Bird Sanctuary makes our neighborhood an inviting respite for our feathered friends. We can help to provide them with food, cover, roosting areas, and nesting spots by planting native seed and berry-producing trees, shrubs, and vines. If these natural plant sources aren't available, backyard feeding not only supplements the birds' natural wintertime feeding, but also gives you a chance to observe wild birds.

When to feed—Feed more often at times of peak energy demand, such as during temperature extremes, nesting season, migration, and in late winter or early spring, when natural seed sources are depleted.

Where to feed—Birds are most likely to eat where they feel safe. Make sure that there is nearby cover to which birds can quickly escape from predators, such as free-roaming cats. Place ground-level feeders in spots where predators cannot hide easily, and set up a loose mesh fence around the feeder.

Water—Birds need water year-round for drinking and bathing. Set up at least one birdbath. The surface should be easy to clean, and there should be a gently sloping shallow end. Place the birdbath away from the feeders to keep the water from being contaminated. Rinse the birdbath daily before refilling it, and clean it once a week, using a 5–10 percent solution of chlorine bleach. You can use a birdbath heater that has a built-in thermostat to warm up the water just enough to keep it from freezing. Never add antifreeze or other chemicals to the water. ●



Excerpted and adapted from The HSUS's brochure, Backyard Feeding of Wild Birds.

Giving Back to Our Community

I've been a realtor for 12 years, and have lived in the Meridian-Kessler, Mapleton-Fall Creek and Watson-McCord areas for 13 years. My love of older homes inspired me to become a realtor. Living in a 100-year-old home has taught me to understand the work that goes into home restoration.

Housing values in our neighborhood are constantly rising. Make sure you have a realtor who knows and understands the value of your older home.

I donate five percent of my commission to the Watson-McCord Neighborhood Association for every sale I make.



Kevin Warren, Realtor

Office: 317.595.2100

Voice Mail: 317.558.6811

Direct: 317.507.7660

Residence: 317.925.4723

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Learning from History

Central Court Historic District is a quaint gem worth a closer look.

by Jeremy Ecenbarger, Watson-McCord resident

THERE IS SOMETHING about the allure of the historic Watson-McCord neighborhood that's hard to resist. I had driven up and down Central Avenue hundreds of times over the years on my commute to work, but had never really stopped to investigate this somewhat hidden gem. Once I did, the appeal was too strong to pass up. The Central Court Historic District was soon my new home.

Thanks to the efforts of several area homeowners and the Historic Landmarks Foundation, this District, located at east 36th Street and Central Avenue, was entered in the National Register of Historic Places in September 2004.

The District, originally platted in 1916, encompasses homes on the east side of Central Avenue numbered 3529 through 3575, all addresses on Central Courts North and South, and homes on the south side of 36th Street numbered 515 through 551.

A local real estate and construction firm, founded in 1906 by Oscar A. Jose and his brother-in-law Peter Balz, called the Jose-Balz Company built many of the District's homes between 1916 and 1930.

The Jose-Balz Company also constructed homes along Fall Creek Boulevard between 30th and 32nd Streets, in Meridian Park, and the 5500 blocks of Delaware and Pennsylvania, among others. Oscar Jose occupied a home located at 209 Washington Court from 1913 to 1915, a testament to his appreciation for the area.

Like other Jose-Balz homes, the



Photos courtesy of Bass Photo Co. Collection, Indiana Historical Society

Many homes in the Central Court Historical District have ceramic tile roofs, such as the Italian Renaissance Revival style home identified in the historic Bass photograph above. Other decorative elements of the home include dormer windows, paired with single cornice brackets, an arched roof over the front stoop, and a two-story garage. In addition, a small, one-story sun porch extends from the south side of the home.

Central Court residences have Craftsman style elements and many were built in an American four square pattern. Several properties contain decorative elements from early twentieth century styles, including Dutch Colonial Revival, Colonial Revival, Mission, and Prairie. Other house forms, such as the bungalow and some revival styles, also appear on Central Court.

The District was originally platted as one addition consisting of 58 mostly rectangular lots, the exceptions being the six triangular corner lots fronting the U-shaped court. Today, the District corresponds to the original plat, excluding the entire south side of Central Court.

The south side of Central Court originally consisted of 10 homes which are no longer there. Those homes were demolished between 1957 and 1972. Indianapolis Public Schools acquired the Life Insurance Company (1957 to 1971) commercial building on the south side of Central Court and the adjacent lots in 1972, combining and converting them into The Louis B. Russell Jr. Elementary School.

Perhaps the most interesting observation of the District is that it provides a significant architectural and historic snapshot of the period with its fine examples of popular middle-class structures and scattered Craftsmen Bungalows.

While many of the homes share a similar style, each also exhibits an individual floor plan and unique exterior and interior treatments that make each structure one of a kind. ●

Re-Development

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neglectful management in the past.

Through an interview with Terry Keusch, Pioneer Development Services, Inc., many of those concerns have been eased by the developer's commitment to this project and the proper management of it in the future.

Learning From Experience

Though this is the first development for Pioneer in the Indianapolis area, it has successfully developed similar communities in the nearby Indiana cities of Evansville, Marion, Jasper, Huntington and Garrett.

These include new construction, acquisition/rehab and historic adaptive re-use developments. When asked what appealed to Pioneer Development and its co-developer, The Whitsett Group, LLC, about the Constitution Garden project, Keusch stated that the architecture of the buildings, the opportunity to improve and revitalize a deteriorated property, the highly-visible location, and the fact that the city of Indianapolis highly favors the re-development of acquisition/rehab properties over new construction for tax credit developments topped their list.

Pioneer and Whitsett Group have enlisted the Indianapolis firm, Ratio Architects, Inc., to finesse the architectural details of this project. Ratio has won many awards for their work including those for: Indiana Cotton Mill Apartments, IUPUI Student Housing, and also for projects like the Clarian Health People Mover and the Dinosphere at the Children's Museum.

A Big Investment

Pioneer and Whitsett plan to invest about 8.5 million dollars into this project, Keusch said. According to Keusch, that's fairly typical for a project of this magnitude.

What Will We See

With construction set to begin by mid October 2007 and wrapping by October 2008, changes to the property will not only be physical, Keusch assures. The very nature of operation will be different than in the past.

The number of units contained on the property is being reduced from 79 to 72.

The exterior of the buildings will receive all-new windows and exterior doors as well as a new roof. All necessary masonry work and cleaning will be completed. A semi-circular driveway with additional parking spaces will be added off of Central Avenue. Existing parking will be moved from the northern to the eastern side of the property.

Site improvements include decorative fencing along Fairfield, a small tot playground, a picnic area with a pavilion, barbecue grills and picnic tables, a freestanding maintenance shed, a gazebo in front of the large building, and new landscaping and green space will be added.

Interior work will consist of a complete gut rehab.

The Difference

A third-party company with extensive apartment management experience, including the management of tax-credit properties, will

manage this development. A leasing agent/manager will be on site during daily office hours. The management company will enact a strict tenant screening policy that will include criminal background and credit checks. Each tenant will be subject to rules and regulations, which will be enforced by the management company. The property is also a designated "Drug Free Zone" with zero tolerance for drug use on the premises. In addition, the property will house an IMPD police substation with two designated parking spaces for IMPD officers. The substation will include a computer workstation, kitchenette, lounge area, and restroom. It will be accessible to IMPD officers 24 hours a day. Any tenant that engages in criminal or mischievous behavior or violates the rules and regulations will promptly be evicted.

Neighborhood Involvement

Keusch states that the community room will be available for neighborhood association meetings. The apartment complex will also pay membership dues to the WMNA. Tenants representation on the neighborhood association board will be encouraged, and the property manager will attend association meetings. Joe Whitsett, the principal of The Whitsett Group, LLC, lives within three miles of the property and will closely monitor the apartments, not only during construction and operations but also in case any operational issues arise. ●

Please Attend!

Please attend our neighborhood association meetings. They are held the third Thursday of every month at 7 p.m. in the basement of Redeemer Lutheran Church located at 3421 North Park Avenue.

GET INVOLVED

Join the Watson-McCord Neighborhood Association

Joining the WMNA allows you to have input into critical decisions that are made about YOUR neighborhood. You must be a member to vote in the proceedings of the WMNA meetings. Your membership dues go toward operating expenses of the association. There are no paid employees of the WMNA. **Make your voice count!**

Visit www.watsonmccord.org for an application, or simply mail your \$10 membership fee to: WMNA, P.O. Box 20790, Indianapolis, IN 46220.

2007 WMNA officers and board members:

Scott Vankirk, **President**

E. David Woodruff, **Vice President**

Belinda Richardson, **Secretary**

Betty Hurn Johnson, **Treasurer**

Board of Directors:

Martha Blue, Shannon Foresell,

Dianne Montgomery, Tanya Walton

Pratt, Nate Rush, Robyn Woods

Our Mission

The Watson-McCord Neighborhood Association exists to promote, create and maintain a viable and productive living environment conducive to neighborhood enhancement. We provide our members services, representation, programs and a commitment to enhance quality of life through community-based problem solving, neighborhood-oriented services and public/private cooperation.

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